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Reading, Writing & Religion

TEACHING THE BIBLE IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Updated Edition



TEXAS
FREEDOM
NETWORK
EDUCATION
♦ FUND ♦

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Mark A. Chancey teaches biblical studies in the Department of Religious Studies in Dedman College of Humanities and Sciences at Southern Methodist University in Dallas. He attended the University of Georgia, where he earned a B.A. in Political Science with a minor in Religion (1990) and an M.A. in Religion (1992), and Duke University, where he received a Ph.D. in Religion with a focus in New Testament studies and early Judaism (1999). He joined the faculty of Southern Methodist University in 2000 and was promoted to Associate Professor in 2006. In addition to religion and public education, his research interests include the Gospels, the Historical

Jesus, archaeology and the Bible, and the political and social history of Palestine during the Roman period. He is the author of two books with Cambridge University Press and several articles and essays. A member of the Society for Biblical Literature, the Catholic Biblical Association, the American Academy of Religion, and the American Schools for Oriental Research, he has received awards for both his teaching and research. His previous report for the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund on the Bible and public education was endorsed by over 185 scholars across the country in biblical, religious, and theological studies.

Reading, Writing & Religion

TEACHING THE BIBLE IN TEXAS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Professor Mark A. Chancey, *Southern Methodist University (Dallas)*



T E X A S
F R E E D O M
N E T W O R K
E D U C A T I O N
♦ F U N D ♦

A Report from the
Texas Freedom Network Education Fund

KATHY MILLER, *TFN president*
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in teaching Bible courses in public schools, especially in Texas. If presented within guidelines established by the courts to protect religious freedom, such courses can be an excellent and desirable way to help students understand the unique importance of the Bible in history and literature.

As this new report from the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund shows, however, teaching the Bible in Texas public schools is currently fraught with problems. *Reading, Writing and Religion: Teaching the Bible in Texas Public Schools* reveals that, with a few notable exceptions, the public school courses currently taught in Texas often fail to meet minimal academic standards for teacher qualifications, curriculum, and academic rigor; promote one faith perspective over all others; and push an ideological agenda that is hostile to religious freedom, science and public education itself.

FINDINGS

This report's findings can be grouped into four broad categories.

Most Bible courses taught in Texas public schools fail to meet even minimal standards for teacher qualifications and academic rigor.

Most Bible courses in Texas have teachers with no academic training in biblical, religious or theological studies. In fact, local clergy teach the courses in some districts.

Moreover, the level of academic rigor in the courses varies tremendously from district to district. High school classes in which the Bible is the only textbook and videos (including cartoons) make up the primary instructional tools are not uncommon. In addition, student activities and test questions often range from the mundane – such as memorizing Bible verses – to the trivial, such as this question in a student exercise in a Houston-area school district: “Approximately how many animals were on [Noah’s] ark the size of a rhesus monkey?”

Most Bible courses are taught as religious and devotional classes that promote one faith perspective over all others.

The vast majority of Texas Bible courses, despite their titles, do not teach about the Bible in the context of a history or literature class. Instead, the courses are explicitly devotional in nature and reflect an almost exclusively

Christian perspective of the Bible. They assume that students are Christians, that Christian theological claims are true and that the Bible itself is divinely inspired – all of which are inappropriate in a public school classroom, according to the Constitution.

In most cases the instructional materials, especially those produced or recommended by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS), betray an obvious bias toward a view of the Bible held by fundamentalist Protestants. As a result, those courses teach perspectives and interpretations of the Bible that are simply not shared by many mainline Protestants, Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox Christians and Jews or within the scholarly community.

Examples abound (citations available in the report text and on file at TFNEF):

1. support for a literal biblical view of a 6,000-year-old Earth, a six-day creation and the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans;
2. belief that recent events confirm that the apocalyptic return of Christ at the “end of days” is imminent;
3. promotion of Christian readings of Hebrew Bible/Old Testament passages as prophetic of Jesus;
4. suggestions that the creation story of Adam and Eve divinely ordains an inferior role for women in society; and
5. assertions that Christianity supersedes or “completes” Judaism.

Most Bible courses advocate an ideological agenda that is hostile to religious freedom, science and public education itself.

Texas Bible courses regularly promote creationism and other forms of pseudo-science. Some teachers, for example, present videos and

lectures from the Creation Science Museum in Glen Rose, Texas. That “museum” advocates a six-day creation, a 6,000-year-old Earth and the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans. Another example of the kind of pseudo-science that one encounters in some Bible courses is the suggestion that perceived racial differences (such as personality and character traits) among humans can be traced back to Noah’s sons and their descendants after the Great Flood. This racist theory was commonly used to justify slavery and discrimination against African Americans in the 19th and 20th centuries.

Moreover, Bible courses often foster notions of American identity as distinctively Christian, sometimes introducing themes from the so-called “culture wars.” Many of the materials used to back up such assertions come from the NCBCPS as well as videos and other materials from WallBuilders, a Texas-based organization dedicated to proving that separation of church and state in this country is a myth. One district uses WallBuilders’ *America’s Godly Heritage*, a video so inaccurate in its content and so unabashedly sectarian in its goals that one federal court has prohibited its use in public schools.

A handful of Texas school districts show that it is possible to teach Bible courses in an objective and nonsectarian manner appropriate to public school classrooms.

Three school districts – Leander, North East (San Antonio) and Whiteface – have managed to avoid many, if not all, of the concerns raised by this report. Aspects of each district’s course provide examples of how public schools might teach about the Bible in a legally and academically sound manner that is respectful toward the biblical material and the diverse religious sensibilities and backgrounds of students.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The problems identified in this report need not be permanent nor are they inherent to any public school Bible course. This report makes five recommendations to help school districts teach appropriate courses about the Bible's influence on history and literature:

1. School districts should adhere to guidelines proposed by the First Amendment Center – *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*. These guidelines have been endorsed by 20 religious and educational groups, including the National Association of Evangelicals, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and other Christian, Jewish and Islamic organizations.
2. The process by which local school boards decide to offer Bible courses and choose the curricula for those courses should be open and transparent and invite the full participation of parents and other citizens from the community.
3. School districts should make sure that teachers have the appropriate academic background and sufficient training on the legal issues involving the teaching of Bible and religion-related courses in public schools.
4. Classes should avoid relying primarily on sectarian resources for student readings, teacher preparation, videos, and other course components. Course materials surveyed for this study suggest that the religious claims of such resources are often presented to students as statements of fact.
5. School officials should regularly monitor the content of Bible courses to ensure that they are academically and legally appropriate.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

In the fall of 2005, the TFN Education Fund surveyed all of the more than 1,000 public school districts throughout Texas. The Education Fund identified 33 school districts that have taught or offered an elective Bible course at least once since the 2001–02 academic year.

This report is based on documents obtained from the 25 school districts that acknowledged teaching a Bible course during the 2005–06 academic year. (See the detailed chart on page 9 of the report.) In most of those districts, students may earn elective credit toward state or local graduation requirements by taking elective Bible courses. In districts that offer Bible electives for state graduation requirements, schools are eligible for additional state funding per student in each Bible course. Such courses must teach general skills set out by the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills curriculum standards for social studies “special topics” classes or English and language arts classes on literary genres or the humanities.

NOTE ON THE UPDATED EDITION

This updated edition of the report includes material on Brenham ISD that was not available in time for inclusion in the original report. On Brenham ISD, see especially Appendix 7.

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I know firsthand the rewards of studying biblical texts in a public school. I have fond memories of reading Genesis and Job in my high school English class, where the teacher and fellow students drew my attention to numerous details of the text that I had never noticed before. Later, I received a deeper introduction to the world of biblical scholarship at a public university. There I found the academic study of the Bible so intellectually invigorating that I chose to devote my life to teaching it. In this report, then, I write as the proud product of public schools and as one who loves the biblical text. I also write as a church-going Christian for whom the Bible has special authority.

This report details serious problems found in most Bible courses currently offered in Texas public schools. Writing it was at times difficult because it was necessary in many cases to draw attention to the shortcomings of the efforts of members of a group whom I very much admire: public school teachers. Many of the teachers whose work is examined here were assigned these courses; they did not necessarily request to teach them. Many work with curricular materials that they did not choose but that their districts or schools gave them. Most are no doubt especially aware of the special challenges raised by such courses – challenges of academic and legal appropriateness and of the need to show sensitivity to the varying religious perspectives found within both the classroom and the larger community. In at least one case, teachers are so devoted to their students that they are paying for course materials out of their own pockets.

Because of the significance of the issues at stake here – including the preservation of religious freedom under the First Amendment – it was important to document the problems in individual courses in detail. Conversations about public school Bible courses are occurring across the United States, and my hope is that this study will be a positive contribution to those conversations by identifying areas of concern. If Bible courses are to be taught in public schools, it is essential that they be taught objectively, in ways that neither encourage nor disparage religious commitments and that reflect awareness of the diversity of religious belief and practice both throughout the nation and in individual communities.

I would like to thank the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, particularly Kathy Miller, Ryan Valentine, Dan Quinn, Judie Niskala, and Sara Struckman for the opportunity to study this vital topic and for the enormous efforts they went through to obtain materials from the schools. The study would not have been possible without the cooperation of the school districts themselves, to whom I also owe thanks. Though I know that some districts will be uncomfortable with the findings, I hope that the study proves helpful in structuring future courses. Lastly, I am greatly indebted to colleagues who spent considerable time reviewing this report: Matthew S. Collins, Director of Congresses and Professions for the Society of Biblical Literature; Jonathan Ebel, Assistant Professor in the Program for the Study of Religion at the University of Illinois at

Urbana-Champaign; Sandie Gravett, Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religion at Appalachian State University; Steve Jenkins, Assistant Professor in Educational Leadership at the University of Texas (Permian Basin) School of Education; Richard A. Layton, Associate Professor in the Program for the Study of Religion at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; David Levenson, Associate Professor in the Department of Religion at Florida State University; Catherine A. Lugg, Associate Professor in the Department of Educational Theory, Policy, and Administration at Rutgers University; Carleen R. Mandolfo, Assistant Professor in the Department of

Religious Studies at Colby College; Erik Owens, Assistant Director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College, and Donald Polaski, Visiting Assistant Professor of Religious Studies at the College of William and Mary. I would like to express special gratitude to Professors Ebel and Layton for the opportunity to discuss the legal, ethical, pedagogical, and historical aspects of Bible courses in public schools in the Illinois Forum on Religion in America, which focused on these issues in 2006, and to Professor Levenson, whose experience working with Florida public school teachers of Bible courses has proven to be a valuable source of insight.

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen a resurgence of interest in the introduction of Bible courses in public schools. Odessa, Texas, received national media attention in 2005 as the Ector County Independent School District deliberated about whether to offer such a course and, if so, which curriculum to use. Many in the community favored the curriculum of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS). That organization portrayed its course as never having been successfully legally challenged, despite the 1998 Florida lawsuit *Gibson v. Lee County School Board* that prohibited teaching its New Testament portion.¹

In addition, in 1999 the Attorney General of the State of Georgia had expressed doubt that the course would pass legal muster.² On August 1, 2005, the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund (TFNEF) published a review of that curriculum, *The Bible and Public Schools: Report on the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS)*,³ demonstrating that it inappropriately and unconstitutionally promoted the group's religious beliefs and was of poor academic quality. Though the NCBCPS revised its curriculum in direct response to TFNEF's critiques, it remains a textbook example of how Bible courses can be stealthily used to introduce theology and even political ideology into the public school classroom, in contravention of the First Amendment. Nonetheless, Ector County ISD is offering the NCBCPS course beginning this fall.

Odessa is not the only place to consider adding a Bible course. In 2006, the state of

Georgia passed a law approving state funding for Bible classes. The primary sponsor of the legislation has acknowledged that the NCBCPS assisted him in drafting it,⁴ and he now sits on the group's advisory board.⁵ Similar legislation has been introduced in Tennessee, Alabama, and Missouri. Whether such laws will significantly increase the number of Bible courses offered in public schools remains to be seen.

Few would question the Bible's historical and cultural influence, and, contrary to the claims of many, its study has never been banned from the public school classroom. The famous 1963 U. S. Supreme Court case *Abington School District v. Schempp* prohibited state-sponsored devotional reading of the Bible in public schools, not its objective study.⁶ The court explicitly affirmed:

It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

Lower court rulings have also emphasized the importance of biblical literacy for cultural literacy. *Crockett v. Sorenson*, for example, noted the Bible's impact on western art, music, literature, law, and the English language as reasons to study it.⁷

Thus, as pointed out by the helpful guide *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*,⁸ the matter at stake is not *whether* Bible courses can be taught but *how* they are

taught. According to *Wiley v. Franklin*, “The Constitutional issue presented in teaching the Bible study courses in the public schools is not the Bible itself, but rather the selectivity, emphasis, objectivity, and interpretive manner, or lack thereof, with which the Bible is taught.”⁹ Courts have repeatedly affirmed the reasoning of *Wiley v. Franklin* that “if that which is taught seeks either to disparage or to encourage a commitment to a set of religious beliefs, it is constitutionally impermissible in a public school setting.”¹⁰ Thus, that case ruled against the courses under consideration because “the evidence does preponderate in favor of a finding that the courses tend to advance the Christian religious faith and, to the extent that it does so advance the Christian faith, it tends to inhibit other religious faiths.”¹¹ Similarly, in *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County*, another District Court prohibited a Bible course because it “advance[d] religion in general and, specifically, fundamentalist Christianity.”¹² In *Gibson v. Lee County*, a case involving the NCBCPS curriculum, the Court followed *Vaughn v. Reed* in arguing that Bible courses “should be taught in an objective manner with no attempt made to indoctrinate the children as to either the truth or falsity of the biblical materials.”¹³

Despite the attention the issue of Bible classes and public education has received, little is known about how many school districts offer such courses, what is taught in the classes, and whether the course contents are “presented objectively as part of a secular program of education” from a nonsectarian perspective, i.e., one that neither encourages nor discourages adoption of particular religious views. Many state education departments do not keep records of the school districts teaching the courses or monitor what they teach in them.¹⁴

In 2000, however, People for the American Way (PFAW) published an illuminating study, *The Good Book Taught Wrong: Bible History Classes in Florida Public Schools*, that surveyed “Bible History” courses taught in Florida in the 1996–1997, 1997–1998, and 1998–1999 school years.¹⁵ Fourteen of Florida’s 67 school districts had offered “Bible History” courses,

which PFAW’s investigation discovered were usually “taught from a Christian, generally Fundamentalist Protestant, perspective. Typically, the courses presented the Bible as a history textbook, assumed that students were Christian, and used the Bible to promote Christian faith formation.” As a result of this study, the state of Florida removed its approval of the existing “Bible History” courses, created entirely new Bible courses that were more academically and constitutionally appropriate, and developed programs to prepare teachers for the special challenges raised by such courses.¹⁶

This new report details the findings of a similar investigation of Bible courses in Texas public schools. In December 2005, the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund sent every school district in the state a request under the Texas Public Information Act seeking information on whether a Bible course had been offered in the previous five years. TFNEF then asked school districts that had offered such a course to provide additional information, including descriptions of the process by which the course was approved, the qualifications of the teacher to offer such a course, syllabi and lesson plans, identification of resources used by both teachers and students, and copies of tests, quizzes, and hand-outs. (See Appendix 1.) This report focuses on the 25 school districts that offered a course in the 2005–2006 academic year, utilizing materials from the previous five academic years. School districts were compensated financially for expenses incurred in this process.

Most districts were very cooperative. All 1,031 districts ultimately responded to our request. In some cases, districts sent in far less material than was requested. For example, officials in the Forsan Independent School District initially indicated that the district had spent no tax dollars on a Bible course and therefore had no information to provide.¹⁷ In fact, Forsan ISD has offered a Bible course off and on for years. When the TFNEF discovered this information, Forsan ISD received a follow-up request for instructional materials from the course. These materials revealed the district had good reason to want the contents of its course hidden from

public view. This example, while atypical, illustrate the difficulties in obtaining accurate information about this controversial topic.

In any case, the findings of this report on Texas are strikingly similar to those of the Florida study by People for the American Way: most public school Bible classes inappropriately and unconstitutionally present sectarian views as fact and adopt an overall approach that explicitly or implicitly encourages adoption of religious beliefs, typically, those held within certain branches of Protestant Christianity. Further, by explicitly or implicitly encouraging commitment to those particular beliefs, these classes can be construed as disparaging other religious views, to use the language of *Wiley v. Franklin*.¹⁸ The courses fall far short of the guideline established by *Abington v. Schempp* that biblical material be “presented objectively as part of a secular program of education.” All too often, they are taught by teachers with little or no academic background in biblical studies, utilize explicitly sectarian resources, and reflect distinctively Christian presuppositions. In some cases the sectarian approach appears to reflect a deliberate decision on the part of the teacher. In others, the problems appear to be unintentional: because the teachers have not received sufficient training in biblical and religious studies and church-state issues, they do not realize that they

are presenting the material from a sectarian perspective. Their districts and administrators, in providing insufficient teacher instruction, professional development, and course oversight, bear considerable responsibility for the problems exposed by this report.

The fact that two studies, the present one and the earlier one by People for the American Way, separated by several years and several states arrived at such similar findings suggests that the state of affairs discussed in these reports is not uncommon. It is quite possible that the situations in other states are similar, with relatively few courses offered but with a relatively high percentage of them inappropriately and unconstitutionally endorsing particular religious views. Should such courses become more common, it is likely that these problems will also become more widespread – unless state education agencies, local school board members, public school educators and administrators, curriculum publishers, church-state experts, education and biblical studies professors, and other interested parties find ways to work together in ensuring that courses are taught in an academically and constitutionally appropriate manner that treats the Bible objectively and the religious diversity of America respectfully. The Bible and our public school students deserve nothing less.

KEY FINDINGS



FINDINGS

1. Bible courses are relatively uncommon, but the number appears to be increasing.
2. Most courses are taught by teachers with no academic training in biblical, religious, or theological studies; in several districts, they are taught by local clergy.
3. The level of academic rigor in Bible courses varies tremendously and often fails to meet even minimal standards expected in our public schools.
4. Most school districts use sectarian materials typically reflecting a Christian (usually Protestant) perspective for curricula, teacher resources, student textbooks, classroom handouts, and videos.
5. Most courses assume that the Protestant Bible is “the” Bible; Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish Bibles, if discussed at all, are presented as deviations from the norm.
6. The Bible is often presented as the product of divine inspiration.
7. Courses assume that students are Christians and that Christian theological claims are true.
8. The Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament is read through an explicitly Christian lens, often as a set of prophecies that are supernaturally fulfilled in the life of Jesus and the early church.
9. Judaism is often described through Christian eyes, and some courses reflect the belief that Christianity superseded or completed Judaism.
10. Biblical stories are treated as literal history.
11. Bible courses are used to promote so-called “creation science” and other forms of pseudo-science.
12. Bible courses are used to further political and ideological agendas, sometimes fostering notions of American identity as distinctively Christian and introducing themes from the so-called “culture wars.”
13. A few school districts succeed in teaching about the Bible in public schools in an objective and nonsectarian manner.

FINDING 1

Bible courses are relatively uncommon,
but the number appears to be increasing.

Only a small number of Texas public school districts offered Bible courses in the 2005–2006 school year; 25 districts out of more than a 1,000, or less than 3%. (See Figure A.) In addition, Roma ISD planned to offer a course in 2005–2006, but insufficient enrollment led to its cancellation. In some districts the course is a recent introduction; in others, it has been offered for a considerable period of time – since 1932 in the case of Big Spring. Ector County and New Braunfels ISDs were scheduled to begin offering Bible courses in the fall of this year (2006), and recent discussions of a Bible class have been reported in Anson,¹⁹ Carrollton-Farmers Branch, Culberson County-Allamore, Dripping Springs,²⁰ and Grand Prairie ISDs²¹ and at a Richardson ISD high school.²² Bible courses are also known to have been taught since 2000–2001 – but not in the 2005–2006 school year – in Arp, Aspermont, Granbury, Joshua, La Porte, Longview, Mesquite, and Riesel ISDs.²³ Other districts had earlier Bible courses, including Dallas, where for decades high school students received credit for Bible survey courses taught at local churches. At least three school districts considered in this study will not offer the course in 2006–2007: Lindale, Millsap, and Mineral Wells.

All Bible courses in Texas are electives; none is required. If students take such courses to meet state graduation requirements for elective classes, the courses must meet requirements set out in the Texas Essential Knowledge and

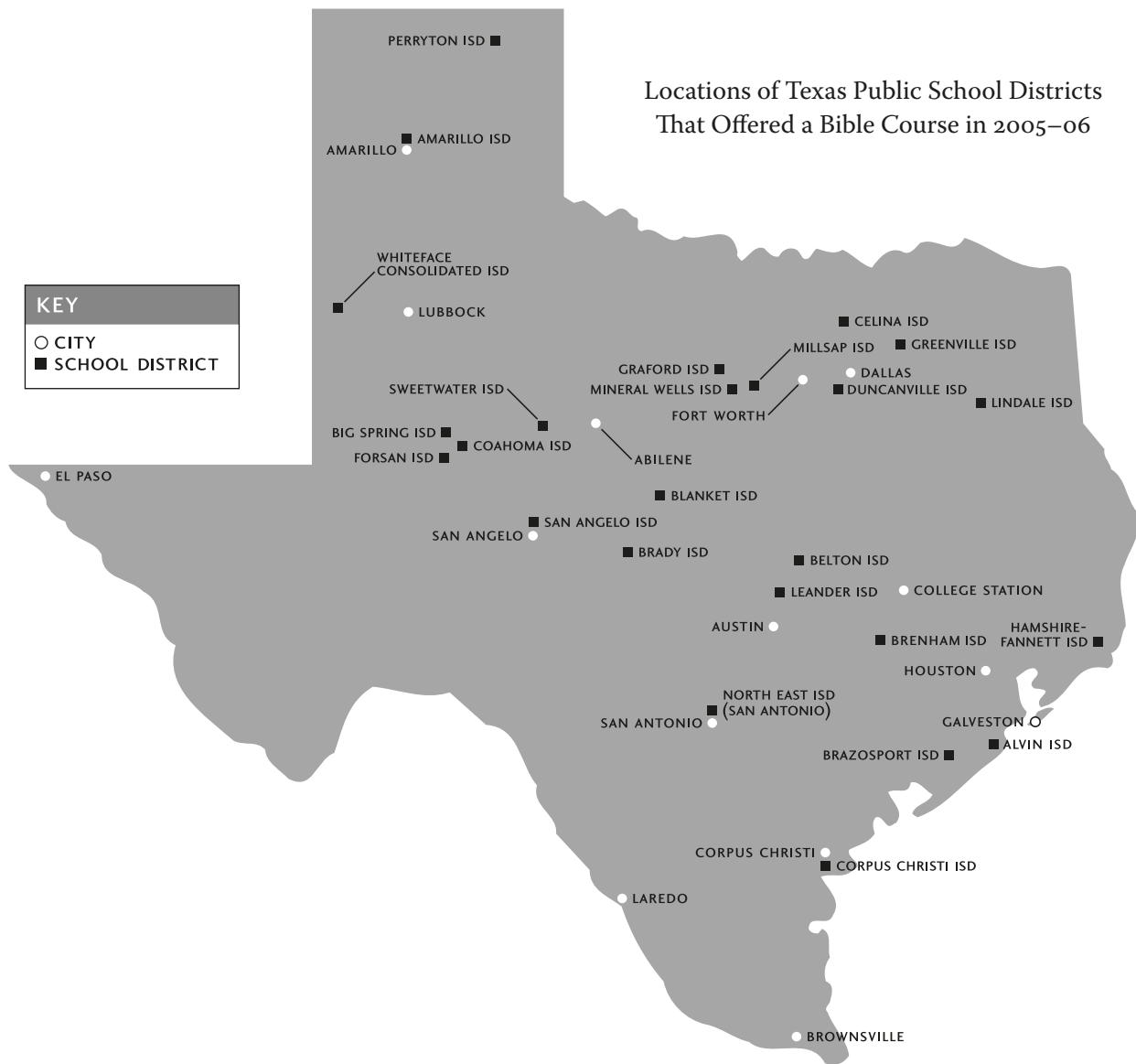
Skills (or TEKS, the state's curriculum standards for public schools). Such classes may be taught as a special topics in Social Studies or English Language Arts literature or humanities courses. Some school districts (including Amarillo, Brady, Coahoma, Graford, Greenville, Perryton, and San Angelo ISDs) may permit students to take the courses to meet local requirements on elective credit toward graduation, but courses in most districts appear to count toward the elective portion of state graduation requirements. Districts offering courses for state credit may receive state funding for them.

The courses are taught most often in Grades 11 and 12 but sometimes in early high school grades. Within some districts (e.g., Amarillo ISD, Corpus Christi ISD, North East ISD), multiple high schools teach the courses. In Sweetwater ISD, the alternative school, rather than the regular high school, offers it. Most schools teach the courses over two semesters, with one semester devoted to the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament and one devoted to the New Testament. In some cases, however, the course is only one semester. Enrollment varies considerably. Only one student took the course in Graford ISD in the fall of 2005, and course evaluations from Alvin ISD mention the small size of the class. Lack of student interest has led to the cancellation of the Mineral Wells ISD course.²⁶ In North East ISD, however, 69 students were recently enrolled in the course at two high schools, and 120–160 students

FIGURE A: Texas Public School Districts That Offered a Bible Course in 2005–06

SCHOOL DISTRICT	STUDENT ENROLLMENT	COURSE TITLE	COURSE TYPE	FIRST OFFERED
Alvin ISD	12,528	Bible History	Social Studies	2001–2002
Amarillo ISD	29,712	Bible History	Special Course Offerings - Electives	prior to 1974
Belton ISD	7,137	The Bible as Literature	English	1996–1997
Big Spring ISD	3,768	Bible History	Humanities	1932–1933
Blanket ISD	238	Bible History	Social Studies	2003–2004
Brady ISD	1,348	Bible History	Local Special Elective	1997–1998
Brazosport ISD ²⁴	13,029	The Bible in History and Literature	Special Topics in Social Studies	1999–2000
Brenham ISD ²⁵	4,919	Bible	Social Studies	unknown
Celina ISD	1,400	The Bible in History and Literature	Literature	2005–2006
Coahoma ISD	794	The Bible as History	Humanities	2003–2004
Corpus Christi ISD	38,978	Bible Survey	Special Topics in Social Studies	1980's or earlier
Duncanville ISD	11,938	Bible Studies	Special Topics in Social Studies	2000–2001
Forsan ISD	650	Humanities	Humanities	2001–2002
Graford ISD	344	Bible History	History	2003–2004
Greenville ISD	5,146	Bible Study	History	1993–1994
Hamshire-Fannett ISD	1,811	Bible History	History/Social Studies	2005–2006
Leander ISD	19,877	Influence of the Old Testament on American Culture	Special Topics in Social Studies	2005–2006
Lindale ISD	3,206	Special Topics in Social Studies	Special Topics in Social Studies: History	1999–2000
Millsap ISD	813	Bible History	Social Studies/History	2005–2006
Mineral Wells ISD	3,626	The Bible in History and Literature	English	2004–2005
North East ISD (San Antonio)	57,265	Literature of the Bible	English	1996–1997
Perryton ISD	2,035	Bible	History	2001–2002
San Angelo ISD	14,653	Foundations of Bible History	English	2002–2003
Sweetwater ISD	2,190	The Bible in History and Literature	Special Topics in Social Studies	2005–2006
Whiteface Consolidated ISD	355	Bible History	Special Topics in Social Studies	2004–2005

Locations of Texas Public School Districts That Offered a Bible Course in 2005–06



reportedly take the course at Big Spring High School each year.²⁷

The processes by which districts decided to create Bible courses also vary. In some cases, the local school board discussed the issue; in others, school officials created the course on their own initiative. The development of a course was sometimes preceded by lengthy investigation of the pertinent issues by special committees (e.g., Perryton ISD), while in other districts only minimal discussion occurred. In Brazosport ISD three teachers, one of whom currently serves as course instructor, requested that the school board offer the class. In Leander ISD student demand prompted the creation of a course. Ector County ISD's course arose because

of a local petition drive backed with the strong support of certain area churches. Apparently, a local citizen and a school board member raised the idea for a course in New Braunfels.²⁸ In Graford and Perryton ISDs, local ministerial alliances approached the board about creating a Bible class and apparently provide funding for teacher salaries and course materials. Similarly, courses in Amarillo ISD have been funded by the Amarillo Ministerial Association,²⁹ and those in Big Spring, Coahoma, and Forsan ISDs by a local nonprofit organization, the Howard County Bible Class Board.³⁰ In Corpus Christi, donations for the course have come from an organization called Bible in Schools and from individual residents.³¹

FAILING TO MEET MINIMAL ACADEMIC STANDARDS



FINDING 2

Most courses are taught by teachers with no academic training in biblical, religious, or theological studies; in several districts, they are taught by local clergy.

In most districts, full-time staff teach the course. In an atypical case, Blanket ISD, the course is taught by a physical education teacher who is certified in other areas for earlier grades but not at the high school level. Usually, however, the teachers have certification in English/language arts, history, social studies, or similar areas; several have masters degrees in education or related fields. Despite impressive qualifications overall, however, most teachers apparently have little or no academic background and field-specific coursework in biblical and/or religious studies. Those who do have such preparation often received it in sectarian educational settings.³² A few districts (e.g., Belton, Brazosport, and Celina ISDs) suggested that their teachers' extensive Bible teaching experience in church-related settings qualified them to teach about it at school, giving the problematic appearance that the religious backgrounds of those teachers were among their primary reasons for their selections as course instructors.

In some schools, local citizens who are not regular district employees teach the course. This was the case in Perryton ISD, for example, where the instructor minored in Bible at Oral Roberts University. In several districts, the teachers are local ministers, some of whom have teaching certification. These districts include:

- In Amarillo a variety of local clergy have taught the course. Most have been Protestant Christians, though one was a rabbi. One recent teacher, for example, is a minister at a

Church of Christ with a Master of Arts in Bible from Harding University and membership in scholarly professional societies, such as the Society of Biblical Literature and the American Academy of Religion.

- In Coahoma the course is funded by the local Bible board and taught by a minister of a local Church of Christ who graduated from Sunset International Bible Institute in Lubbock, Texas.
- In Duncanville the teacher is a retired minister who formerly taught at Independent Baptist College, a Bible college in Dallas, and has a master's degree in education from North Texas State University (now University of North Texas) and a doctorate in theology from Orthodox Baptist Institute.³³
- In Forsan the course is funded by the local Bible board and taught by area Protestant pastors.

With so few teachers having had courses in biblical studies and similar disciplines, it is perhaps unsurprising that so many courses exhibit sectarian qualities. Without field-specific academic coursework, teachers are apparently apt to rely primarily upon either their own religious backgrounds or whatever they have learned about the Bible through popular culture. In some cases, teachers appear to have been selected primarily because of the familiarity with the Bible provided by their church backgrounds. Such backgrounds can obviously be an invaluable and important resource for developing courses, but the problems reflected in the materials provided by Texas school districts suggest that

additional training is necessary to make sure the course is taught in a nonsectarian manner. It should be added, however, that often even when teachers did have academic backgrounds in biblical studies, sectarian elements were still evident in their courses.

The use of local clergy to teach Bible courses in public schools raises its own serious questions

about the possibility of excessive entanglement between church and state. One might argue that the specialized training clergy often receive qualifies them to teach Bible courses, and in

some cases, that might be true. Such training is usually attained, however, in settings designed to help those clergy develop a solid theological foundation for their ministries. That is to

Without proper training, teachers often rely primarily upon either their own religious backgrounds or whatever they have learned about the Bible through popular culture.

say, a high-quality theological education appropriately teaches future clergy to think theologically within their own faith traditions. In and of itself, however, it does not necessarily

prepare them to teach about the Bible in the nonsectarian, pluralistic setting of a public school, a fact evidenced by the materials provided to the TFNEF by Texas school districts.

FINDING 3

The level of academic rigor in Bible courses varies tremendously and often fails to meet even minimal standards expected in our public schools.

Most courses treat the Bible as a depository of details – some significant, others obscure – to be mastered. Thus, the overwhelming majority of materials provided to the TFNEF consists of tests and quizzes that test student familiarity with Bible stories or individual verses through multiple-choice, matching, and fill-in-the blank questions. Many questions are reproduced verbatim from textbooks or other resources. Some districts frequently utilize crossword puzzles, word searches, and similar assignments with unclear pedagogical goals.

Retention of content is, of course, an important component of many types of courses. Often, however, the classes examined for this report tested *only* mastery of content while doing little to promote the development of critical thinking skills. The Texas Administrative Code (TAC), Title 19, Part II, Chapter 113, urges all Social Studies teachers to nurture higher order critical thinking skills in implementing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This is evidenced in the guidelines for teaching U.S. History and other high school Social Studies courses. Chapter 113 states, “A greater depth of understanding of complex content material can be attained when integrated social studies content from the various disciplines and critical-thinking skills are taught together.” Courses with a primary emphasis on memorization skills thus fall far short of the expectations of TEKS.

Similarly, many courses have few, if any, substantial writing assignments. Most courses

stress basic memorization work, whether of individual Bible verses, entire Psalms, Proverbs, the Sermon on the Mount, the Ten Commandments (in the Protestant order), or the names of the books of the Bible (also in Protestant order). Students are asked to copy Bible verses; to identify passages by book, chapter, and verse; and to look up passages in order to fill in blanks on a worksheet. San Angelo ISD, for example, has numerous worksheets with exercises like the following:

“Read Acts 1:1–8. Jesus told the disciples to wait in ____ until they could be ____ with the ____.”

Such exercises are extremely common in almost all districts.

Many districts make extensive use of videos, whether the sectarian videos described elsewhere in the report; more appropriate documentaries produced by National Geographic, the History Channel, or the Arts and Entertainment Channel; classics like *The Ten Commandments* or *Ben Hur*; or more recent dramatizations. Some frequently show Bible cartoons. Duncanville ISD, for example, has purchased several animated Bible movies produced by Hanna-Barbera, and Forsan ISD shows videos from the popular Christian children’s series *VeggieTales*. One can understand the advantages of the occasional classroom use of videos, particularly in courses where the reading load is extensive. In some cases, however, a considerable amount of

classroom time is devoted to watching movies. For example, lesson plans show that in one recent school year, students in Brady High School's Bible course watched movies in over 20% of their class sessions.

Fortunately, some courses include elements that are more challenging. Though this report notes problematic elements of the Amarillo course, it

is far more intellectually demanding than most. Mixed in among its objective questions are essay and other assignments that require students to use their analytical abilities. Consider, for example, this study question: "What can you find out about Onesimus in the book of Philemon? After you read Philemon, briefly tell in story form what situation Onesimus is in when Paul writes his letter." An assignment over Acts titled "Why John Mark Went Home" encourages students to demonstrate understanding of the book's content while also using their creativity: "Use your imagination as you try to figure out what might have caused John Mark to abandon the mission trip." Belton ISD's course,

Some school districts frequently show Bible cartoons, such as animated Bible movies produced by Hanna-Barbera and videos from the popular Christian children's series *VeggieTales*.

an English elective, has numerous puzzle-type assignments, but it also requires students to apply literary concepts to the biblical materials, noting poetic elements in Nahum, novelistic

elements in Esther, and characteristics of a short story in Jonah. It also emphasizes the interpretive usefulness of ideas like plot, exposition, conflict, climax, characterization,

theme, and irony. An essay assignment in North East ISD in San Antonio also reflects efforts to develop students' analytical skills:

Choose two Psalms to discuss, using the qualities of Hebrew poetry discussed in class. Complete the following:

1. Read and analyze the Psalms.
2. Determine the category of each Psalm.
3. Discuss the ideas presented and the method used (What kind of balance/parallelism?)
4. Identify Images, Metaphors, Similes.
5. Briefly compare the two psalms.
6. On the back, illustrate one psalm.

PROMOTING ONE FAITH OVER ALL OTHERS



FINDING 4

Most school districts use sectarian materials typically reflecting a Christian (usually Protestant) perspective for curricula, teacher resources, student textbooks, classroom handouts, and videos.

Schools use a variety of resources for their Bible courses. Many of these – Bible atlases, dictionaries, and other reference works – are nonsectarian and thus appropriate for use in public schools. Often, however, the sectarian resources teachers use are more appropriate for church settings than for public schools, and theological claims in those resources find their way into the courses. These resources often prove to be the most influential used, serving as the primary source for lecture content and examinations, with test questions drawn directly from them, even to the point of reproducing their exact wording.³⁴

Eleven Texas districts utilize the curriculum of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS). (See figure B on page 20.) Seven closely model their courses after it, while in four districts, other resources are equally or more influential in determining course content. The materials submitted by these districts demonstrate that the sectarian claims of that curriculum permeated the classrooms. Improvement was seen in some districts in the 2005–2006 school year, after NCBCPS revised its curriculum in response to the 2005 TFNEF report, but serious problems remain. The curriculum appears to be primarily the product of two individuals who have no academic training in biblical or religious studies. In addition, it had never been reviewed by a professional biblical scholar until the TFNEF study. Much of it is reproduced from online and popular-level sources. Nonetheless, some districts are apparently receiving state funds

and awarding credit toward state graduation requirements for courses utilizing that deeply flawed and inappropriate curriculum. (See Appendix Four.)

Even combining the two categories in Figure B (extensive use, limited use), the number of Texas school districts using the NCBCPS curriculum, eleven,³⁷ is less than a fourth of the 52 claimed by the NCBCPS itself.³⁸ Adding the very few school districts known to have used the course in the past (Arp, Aspermont, La Porte, and Midway) does not significantly change the total number. The NCBCPS markets its course by strongly emphasizing the large number of school districts that supposedly teach it; as of late July 2006, its Web site claimed that its curriculum is currently offered in 362 districts nationwide. Such oft-repeated claims now appear to be quite inaccurate. If the situation in Texas is representative, the curriculum is probably actually taught in only a few dozen districts.

Several school districts rely heavily on *Halley's Bible Handbook*. First printed in 1924 and now in its 25TH edition, it is a beloved classic for many readers.³⁹ Its intended audience, however, is not the general public but the Christian church, as made clear in its opening pages:

*Christ is the center and heart of the Bible ...
The Old Testament is an account of a nation.
The New Testament is an account of a man.
The Nation was founded and nurtured of
God to bring the Man into the World ... How
can anyone be so blind, or so dumb, as to
go through life, and Face Death, without the*

Christian Hope? Apart from Christ, what is there, what can there be, either for This World, or the Next, to make life worthwhile? We All have to Die. Why try to laugh it off? It seems like Every Human Being would Welcome Christ with Open Arms, and consider it the Proudest Privilege of his Life to wear the Christian Name.⁴⁰

Written by a conservative Protestant for conservative Protestants, the book’s theological perspective thoroughly shapes its presentation of material, as examples cited later in the report will illustrate. Duncanville ISD issues *Halley’s Bible Handbook* to every student in the class as a textbook. In Corpus Christi ISD it is the major resource for teacher preparation, its contents thoroughly incorporated into lectures, lesson plans, and tests. Lindale ISD also appears to use it as a teacher resource. Brazosport, Mineral Wells and San Angelo ISDs make it available to students to supplement their other books and materials.

Other examples of the use of distinctively Protestant materials include:

- Alvin ISD: Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 3RD ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994);⁴¹
- Amarillo and Perryton ISDs: a curriculum produced by an Amarillo minister associated with the Church of Christ;

- Belton ISD: transparencies from an organization called Walk Thru the Bible;⁴²
- Big Spring ISD: charts, tables, and outlines from Gospel Light Productions and Rose Publishing;⁴³
- Celina ISD: workbooks created by David Padfield, a Christian evangelist in Zion, Illinois;⁴⁴
- Coahoma ISD: Max E. Anders, *30 Days to Understanding the Bible* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988);
- Duncanville ISD: Catherine B. Walker, *Bible*

Workbook (Chicago: Moody Press, 1952), vols. 1 and 2;

- Forsan ISD: charts, tables, and outlines from Gospel Light Productions;
- Lindale ISD: the *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book: Old Testament*

(Dallas: Dallas Public Schools, 1949) and *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book: New Testament* (Dallas: Dallas Public Schools, 1947), which, though formerly taught in public schools, reflects a strong Protestant theological orientation.

Video choices also often reflect sectarian perspectives. Several districts (Alvin, Brady, Brazosport, Coahoma, and Greenville ISDs) use the NCBCPS-recommended video series *The*

Eleven Texas districts utilize the curriculum of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS). The materials submitted by these districts demonstrate that the sectarian claims of that curriculum permeated the classrooms.

FIGURE B

SCHOOL DISTRICTS CLOSELY FOLLOWING THE NCBCPS CURRICULUM	SCHOOL DISTRICTS THAT USE THE NCBCPS CURRICULUM AS ONE RESOURCE AMONG SEVERAL
1. Brady ISD 2. Brazosport ISD 3. Celina ISD 4. Graford ISD 5. Mineral Wells ISD 6. San Angelo ISD 7. Sweetwater ISD	1. Alvin ISD ³⁵ 2. Hamshire-Fannett ISD ³⁶ 3. Lindale ISD 4. Perryton ISD

Visual Bible, which presents dramatizations of biblical stories, reproduced word-for-word from the New International Version and apparently designed primarily for faith formation and evangelism.⁴⁵ Big Spring, Blanket, and possibly Alvin ISDs show *Jesus*, a film based on the Gospel of Luke that has been widely distributed for missionary purposes. Greenville ISD shows *Resurrection* (1999) by evangelist Max Lucado as well as videos marketed as “family” or “Christian” movies that have little relevance to biblical studies. One example is *The Miracle of the Cards* (Cloud Ten Pictures, 2001), about the 1.3 million get-well cards sent to an eight-year-old cancer patient; the video cover itself promises that the movie will “bring tears to your eyes and make even the toughest skeptic examine their own faith.” Two others were produced by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, *The Climb* (2003), about competing mountain climbers, and *The Ride* (1997), about cowboys.

Greenville and Alvin ISDs show students fictional movies that reflect *dispensational premillennialism*, a belief held only by certain Protestant groups that faithful Christians will be “raptured” to heaven while less faithful Christians and members of other faiths go through a period of “tribulation” before Jesus returns in glory and defeats the forces of evil. Both districts show movies from the *Left Behind* series, based on the best-selling books by Timothy LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins (Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1995–present). In Greenville, students also watch *Tribulation* (the movie’s tagline: “You know it’s faith, when it’s all you’ve got left”).

More details about many of the sources noted above and examples of other problematic resources are discussed in the following sections of the report.

FINDING 5

Most courses assume that the Protestant Bible is “the” Bible; Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Jewish Bibles, if discussed at all, are presented as deviations from the norm.

Teachers in the majority of school districts the TFNEF surveyed present the Protestant Bible as the standard. Lecture notes from Corpus Christi ISD are typical: “The Bible is divided into two divisions – the Old Testament and the New Testament. There are 66 books in the Bible – 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament.” Throughout the state, handouts, charts, and tests demonstrate that this form of the Bible is presented as the norm, with the “Old Testament” often further divided into the categories of Law, History, Poetry, and Prophets. Most of the course materials mentioned above reflect familiarity only with this Protestant version of the Bible.

For Jews, Roman Catholics, and Eastern Orthodox Christians, however, the description of a 66-book Bible is inaccurate. The Jewish Bible, for example, has the same contents as the Protestant Old Testament, but they are grouped into 24 books, rather than 39, and are organized differently into three parts: the *Torah* (Law), the *Nebi'im* (Prophets), and the *Ketubim* (Writings). The importance of the different organization of Jewish and Protestant Bibles is illustrated by the emphasis some school districts place on the book of Malachi. An exercise from Corpus Christi ISD, for example, notes that Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament, suggesting that its lament of Jewish disobedience emphasized the need for salvation that Jesus brought. The Jewish Bible, however, ends not with Malachi but with Chronicles, which looks forward to the rebuilding of the temple.

Furthermore, because Jews do not accept the

New Testament, they do not call their scriptures the “Old Testament.” Rather, they call their Bible the *Tanak* or simply the Bible. Scholars sometimes refer to the Jewish scriptures as the “Hebrew Bible” because its books were written primarily in that language. As for Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Bibles, their Old Testaments include books (sometimes called the Apocrypha) not found in the Protestant Bible.⁴⁶ In many cases, students receive no exposure at all to these important differences. In no districts are students required to memorize the order of books in Jewish, Catholic, or Eastern Orthodox Bibles, though they are very frequently required to memorize the Protestant order. Few courses devote serious time to issues of canonization, or the processes by which different forms of the Bible developed.

A few school districts (e.g., Amarillo, Brady, Celina, Duncanville, Millsap, and North East ISDs) attempt to explain the distinctive characteristics of different Bibles, but in most cases, the Protestant Bible is usually still assumed to be the norm.⁴⁷ Brady ISD, for example, devotes 1–2 days to the Apocrypha, but handouts reflect an emphasis on the Protestant Bible. A lesson plan covering the Apocrypha from Brazosport ISD repeats wording directly from the NCBCPS curriculum and states the objective of the week as “understanding of the background of Christianity and its roots in Judaism. Examination of the literary and historical value of the Apocryphal books, which are not included as a part of the Hebrew, and most of the Christian, scriptures.” Here the

FIGURE C: Districts That Use a Specific Bible Translation as Their Primary Text

DISTRICT	TRANSLATION
Alvin ISD	KJV and NIV (presented side by side in a parallel Bible)
Belton ISD	NIV
Big Spring ISD	NIV
Brady ISD	KJV and NIV (presented side by side in a parallel Bible)
Coahoma ISD	NIV
Corpus Christi ISD	KJV or NIV
Duncanville ISD	KJV
Forsan ISD	NIV
Lindale ISD	KJV
Mineral Wells ISD	KJV and NIV (presented side by side in a parallel Bible)
San Angelo ISD	NIV
Sweetwater ISD	NIV

KJV = King James Version
NIV = New International Version

curriculum rightly recognizes that the Jewish scriptures does not include the Apocrypha but fails to recognize that because Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox Christians outnumber Protestants, the Apocryphal books *are* in most Christian Bibles. Materials from Millsap ISD contrast the “Hebrew Bible (3 Divisions)” with the “English Bible (5 Divisions).” Such descriptions are problematic, since the *Tanak*, like Christian Bibles, has been translated into English. The juxtaposition of “Hebrew Bible” with “English Bible” fosters the notion of the Jewish Bible as foreign and exotic but Christian Bibles as typically American.

The treatment of translation issues is also important, because translations are by their very nature also interpretations, and in the case of the Bible, they often vary widely and significantly in their treatment of particular words and verses. Approximately half of the districts specify the translation(s) of the Bible as the primary text(s) for the course. In each and every one of those districts, the Bible selected is either the King James Version (KJV), the New International Version (NIV), or both.⁴⁸ Both the KJV and NIV are distinctively Protestant translations

that are especially popular among conservative Protestants. For a few Protestant groups, in fact, the KJV is the *only* acceptable English translation of the Bible.

The use of the KJV in public education also has a troubling history. In the 19TH century, Roman Catholic discomfort with the classroom reading of the KJV was one factor contributing to the creation of parochial schools. Usage of the KJV generated so much tension between Protestants and Roman

Catholics that riots broke out in Philadelphia in 1844, and court rulings later in the century affirmed that it was particularly associated with Protestant, rather than Roman Catholic, Christianity.

The more modern NIV was produced by evangelical Protestants for evangelical Protestants, and its translation choices are sometimes shaped as much by theological sensibilities as by concern with ancient grammar and syntax. This is particularly true in regard to the Hebrew scriptures. As one scholar has put it, “The NIV reflects without apology the [Christian] messianic interpretation of the Old Testament.”⁴⁹

One can imagine the pedagogical advantages of having a standard Bible for classroom use. Indeed, in courses that were otherwise successful in implementing a nonsectarian approach, the assignment of these two translations might not be a cause for concern. After all, all translations have their strengths, weaknesses, and distinctive characteristics. However, when viewed within the context of the other materials submitted by these school districts, the selection of these two translations underscores the overall Protestant nature of the courses. It is especially noteworthy that not a single course assigns as its primary text one of the other Protestant translations (Revised

Standard Version, New Revised Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, etc.) or any Roman Catholic or Jewish translations.

For many districts, the Protestant Bible is the only textbook assigned. At least one court has found this approach problematic, particularly when the class focuses on biblical history.

Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District ruled “the course may not be taught using the Bible as the only source of historical fact or as if the Bible were actual literal history.” In some cases, school districts may be receiving state funds and students may be receiving credit toward state graduation requirements for courses in which the Bible alone is the textbook.

FINDING 6

The Bible is often presented as the product of divine inspiration.

Belief in the inspiration of the Bible is what makes it an authoritative text for Jews and Christians. Teaching students about different forms of that belief is, of course, appropriate in a public school classroom. Many courses, however, go well beyond teaching *about* such beliefs to *assuming* or *advocating* them. In some cases, a specific view of inspiration is presupposed, that of inerrancy – the view held by some (not all) Protestants that since the Bible is divinely inspired, it is without error, 100% historically and scientifically accurate, includes no contradictions, and (in some forms of the belief) has been preserved for thousands of years without variations in its wording.

In Blanket ISD a class session early in the course follows this lesson plan: “Introduction to Genesis. What the scripture says about itself (2 Tim. 3:16–17).” Second Timothy 3:16–17 reads, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (KJV). From the very beginning of the course, students are clearly being encouraged to adopt the view that the Christian Bible is divinely inspired and, by focusing on verses from the New Testament book of 2 Timothy when the lesson is on Genesis, to read the Hebrew Bible through a Christian lens.

Another clear example of the espousal of explicitly religious viewpoints in the classroom comes from Lindale ISD, where students read online essays titled “The Truth of the Bible”⁵⁰

and “10 Reasons to Believe in the Bible.”⁵¹ The two essays argue for the Bible’s inspiration and inerrancy. The latter reading is divided into sections devoted to topics such as “Its Claims for Itself,” “Its Miracles,” “Its Unity,” “Its Historical and Geographical Accuracy,” “Its Endorsement by Christ,” “Its Prophetic Accuracy,” “Its Survival,” “Its Power to Change Lives,” and “The Truth of the Bible.” A test ensures that students carefully study the essay’s claims. (See Figure D on page 26.)

In Duncanville ISD assigned readings over Genesis from Walker’s *Bible Workbook* include a section titled “The Wonders of the Bible” (vol. 1, p. 4). Among those wonders are:

- “Unity: The Bible is one great book with one great theme, though it contains 66 separate volumes written by about 40 authors, in three different language, upon different topics, and under different circumstances... Who could possibly have done it but God?”
- “Claim to be God’s Word: More than 2000 times in the Old Testament the words ‘thus saith the Lord’ or similar terms are used. No other book matches such claims. Anyone who reads the Bible with open mind and heart is convinced that the Bible is God’s word to man.”

Note in particular how such arguments place the blame for a lack of belief squarely on the workbook’s reader: if the students reading it aren’t convinced the Bible is God’s word, it implies, then they must not have an open mind and open heart. The workbook is rather

FIGURE D: Test Questions Used in Lindale ISD Bible Course

Short Answer. Answer three of the following questions. Use Specific examples.

1. How is the Bible's honesty a good reason to believe what the Bible says?
2. The miracles of the Bible are considered an argument for its credibility.
Name one of the miracles in the Bible.
3. How is the unity of the Bible a good reason to believe it?
4. What does it mean to say that the Bible is endorsed by Christ?
5. Explain how the survival of the Bible makes it believable?

explicitly trying to conform their beliefs to the view of divine inspiration.

Brady and Big Spring school districts show the two-part video *How the Bible Came to Be* (Muskegon, MI: Gospel Films, 1978). The description on the video cover reads: "Together, these two remarkable volumes answer many of the questions concerning the authenticity of Scripture." Its main goal is to assure viewers that the Bible is completely historically accurate and that its original wording has been preserved without

change since its inspiration. Part one, which covers the Protestant Old Testament, argues that "God did not only give

his word to mankind but also made sure that it was not tampered with at all." It ends with the claim that "the stage was set. The messiah could come." Part two, devoted to the New Testament, begins with an image of modern Jerusalem and the reading of Matthew 23:37, a verse in which Jesus laments Jerusalem's murder of prophets. It then immediately discusses the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE; the

linkage of these ideas suggests that Jerusalem's destruction was the result of Jewish failure to accept Jesus as the messiah, a belief with a long history within the Christian tradition. The video claims erroneously that biblical scholars have reconstructed the original wording of the New Testament documents, "even in the smallest details." The video concludes:

The world is full of people and for all those people there is one important book – the

Bible. No other text out of antiquity has been preserved undamaged. How could this have been? In the Gospel of John we read, "These things are written that you might believe that

Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing, you might have life in his name." "The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth forever and ever."

Additional examples of classroom advocacy or assumption of the belief in biblical inspiration are provided in subsequent sections of this report.

A video used in two districts assures students that the Bible is completely historically accurate and that its original wording has been preserved without change since its inspiration.

FINDING 7

Courses assume that students are Christians and that Christian theological claims are true.

All too often in Texas Bible courses, Christian faith claims are presented in a way that implies their factual accuracy. The (Protestant) Christian Bible is assumed to be the principal guide for doctrine and behavior, not only for the Church in all its variations but for students as well. Thus, for example, on an assignment from Brady ISD we find: “What foundation for marriage did God set through Adam & Eve?” The use of first-person pronouns in exercises and readings reflects an assumption that students are Christians and encourages (sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly) them to incorporate biblical claims into their own belief systems. In Hamshire-Fannett ISD, for example, questions ask, “How does God create Eve? Compare to the creation of Adam. What does this say to us about the place of women in creation? What does this say to us about God’s attitude towards women?”

Alvin ISD provides other illustrative examples. One assignment reads: “Today’s morals in Christianity is [*sic*] based on the teachings of the Bible. The Lord told Moses in Leviticus 17–20 to tell his people (the Israelites) what they could and could not do. Pick the 15 most important don’ts and 10 of the least important don’ts (in your mind) for today’s society.” The focus on these particular chapters of Leviticus rather than others is revealing; they focus primarily on sexual ethics and advocate (among other things) the death penalty for male homosexuals. Test questions for the New Testament portion of the course often consist of sentences reproduced verbatim from Gundry’s textbook, *A Survey of*

the New Testament, with students required to fill in blanks, as in the following:

- “Christ [*sic*] self-sacrificial death inaugurated the new covenant and made possible a full ____ of ____.”
[the intended answer, from Gundry, p. 15: “remission of sins.”]
- “What is the theological reason for studying the New Testament?”
[the intended answer, from Gundry, pp. 16–17: “The theological reason is that the New Testament consists of divinely inspired accounts and interpretations of Jesus’ redemptive mission in the world and forms the standard of belief and practice for the church.”]
- “The resurrection of Jesus provides power for Christian living and guarantees what?” [the intended answer from Gundry, p. 119: “both his return and the resurrection and eternal life of those who believe in him.”]

Similarly, in Blanket ISD, a quiz question asks:

“What holiday do we celebrate here in the USA to acknowledge the resurrection of Jesus?”

Lesson plans for one week include:

- 1/11: “John 2:1–12. Jesus’ first miracle. The Bible’s view on alcohol.”
[Jesus’ first miracle, according to John, was the transformation of water to wine at the wedding at Cana.]
- 1/12 “John 2:13–22. Jesus cleanses the Temple. The Bible’s view on gambling.” [The passage has no relation to gambling but is

nonetheless obviously being used for the class's ethical instruction.]

- 1/13 “John 3:1–21. Salvation by Faith. What is faith?”
- 1/14 “The Samaritan woman. The Bible’s view on true worship.”

[The lesson assumes that “the Bible” is the *Christian* Bible. The passage, John 4:3–30, suggests that “true worship” excludes the ancient Jewish temple, not to mention other religions.]

Materials submitted by Forsan ISD include a lecture outline over Acts presenting “God’s Road to Life.” The outline’s main points are “Jesus Christ is the one and only way;” “Jesus declares it;” “As followers of Christ we are commanded to tell the good news;” and “The Good News,” which traces humanity’s predicament of sinfulness requiring punishment, Christ’s payment of the penalty, and the assurance of salvation for those who believe in him. Elsewhere in the Forsan materials, what appear to be sermon notes seem to serve as the basis for a lecture on the book of Jude:

As we study this book, you will come to see that this book is timeless. You will see that this book is for the Church today. That as it was long ago where unbelievers and apostates were trying to influence and destroy the true Church, so it is today... Today there are those within the ranks of the Church, some in leadership positions, that are trying to mislead the Church and distort the Gospel of Jesus Christ. There are men and women who have rejected the authority of God’s Word and replaced it with their own thoughts, philosophies, and feelings. They are trying to replace the glorious Gospel that exalts and glorifies Jesus Christ with “another gospel” that exalts man and embraces and condones his sin.

It is important to note that whether this particular passage was actually recited in the classroom is not known. Regardless, its presence in course materials reflects the disturbing assumption that sermon notes and lecture notes are interchangeable. It vividly illustrates how Christian theological claims often inform and infuse the presentation of the Bible in Texas classrooms.

FINDING 8

The Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament is read through an explicitly Christian lens, often as a set of prophecies that are supernaturally fulfilled in the life of Jesus and the early church.

When reading the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament, courses often present Christian theological interpretation as the standard for reading. Thus, the serpent in the Garden of Eden is interpreted as Satan (a Christian, but not traditionally a Jewish, belief) and various verses are cited as support for the belief in a Trinitarian god of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (also a Christian, but not Jewish, belief). Numerous verses are depicted as supernaturally predictive of Jesus. Often, passages are chosen for classroom emphasis precisely because of their importance for classical Christian theology. When specifically Christian interpretations are discussed in the classroom, teachers should identify them as such and should also devote considerable time to Jewish and other alternative interpretations – things that rarely happen in these courses.

Thus, in Amarillo and Perryton ISDs, a study sheet for a unit test on Genesis-Nehemiah identifies the following verses as “Prophecies to remember”: “Joel 2:28-The Holy Spirit” “Isa. 7:14-Virgin Birth” “Mic. 5:2-Bethlehem birth of Jesus” “Jer. 31:31-New covenant.” During its discussion of Exodus, Brazosport shows the NCBCPS-recommended video, *The Miracle of Passover*, from the late Messianic (Christian) Jewish evangelist Zola Levitt. This video interprets the Jewish Passover as a symbol of Christ’s sacrifice and other Christian beliefs.⁵² A quiz question over the video reads, “The unleavened ____ and the third cup of ____ represent communion, the blessing of the bread and the trinity. Matt. 26:26.”

In Corpus Christi ISD an essay question instructs students to write about “how God’s purpose and plan of the Old Testament has fulfillment in the New Testament.” Lecture notes on Leviticus read:

“The Sacrificial System, of Divine Origin, was placed of God at the very center and heart of Jewish national life. Whatever the immediate applications and implications may have been to Jews, the unceasing sacrifice of animals, and the never-ending glow of altar fires, beyond doubt, were designed of God, to burn into the consciousness of man’s sense of their deep sinfulness, and to be an agelong picture of the coming Sacrifice of Christ, toward whom they pointed and in whom they were fulfilled.” [underlining in original]

One of the categories into which the Psalms are divided in Duncanville ISD is “Messianic Psalms.” Psalm 2 is interpreted as a reference to Jesus as God’s son, Psalm 16 as a reference to Jesus’ resurrection and glorification, Psalm 22 as a prediction of Jesus’ suffering on the cross. A quiz lists Psalms 2, 16, 22, 40, 45, 72, 110 and asks, “How do each of the following verses refer to Christ?” A fill-in-the-blank question from Forsan ISD asks: “Isaiah predicts the coming of the M____, the Messiah’s b____, the M____’s ministry, and the Messiah’s d____” [the desired answers appear to be, respectively, “Messiah,” “birth,” “Messiah’s,” and “death”].

FINDING 9

Judaism is often described through Christian eyes and some courses reflect the belief that Christianity superseded or completed Judaism.

The materials submitted by Texas school districts provided no evidence of intentional anti-Semitism. Some courses encourage students to learn more about various aspects of both ancient and modern Judaism. An assignment in Duncanville ISD, for example, requires students to research a Jewish festival.

Unfortunately, however, most courses reflect little familiarity with the tragic history of anti-Semitism, in which biblical passages have been cited to justify prejudice against and persecution of Jews. In addition, the overtly Christian nature of most courses often obscures the reality of Judaism as a living, dynamic religion. Discussion of Judaism stops with ancient Israel, which is sometimes described as a disobedient nation that stood in need of a savior, Jesus. History is often divided into eras that include a “period of silence” between the time of the prophets and the arrival of Jesus, a period in which God ceased revealing himself to Jews. The implication of such ideas is that Christians replaced or superseded Jews as God’s people.

In many courses negative portrayals of Jewish leaders from the New Testament function as the primary or even only source of information about them. Thus, the ancient Pharisees, forerunners of the rabbis from whom modern Judaism sprang, are described as hypocrites and temple priests as treacherous. The problem is not that such passages are discussed in the classroom at all; they are an important part of the New Testament and their treatment in the course is important, perhaps all the more so because of their controversial nature. The

problem is that the consideration of such passages in most courses is so oversimplified and lacking in nuance that students are unlikely to realize the ancient circumstances (e.g., the lengthy efforts of early Judaism and Christianity to differentiate themselves from each other) that gave rise to them. Indeed, for many students such passages may be their *only* source of information about Judaism.

The oft-used *Halley’s Bible Handbook* illustrates the issue. The last paragraph in the section titled: “Malachi: Final Message to a Disobedient People” reads:

Thus closes the Old Testament. 400 years elapsed. Then came the Messiah, whom the Hebrew Nation had been born to bring forth. As through the centuries they had rejected the prophets of God, so when the Messiah arrived, they rejected him. Since which time Jews have been homeless wanderers over the earth, the tragedy and miracle of the ages.⁵³

A question from Corpus Christi ISD, where the *Halley’s* text serves as the teacher’s primary source, reads: “His [book] was the final Old Testament message to a disobedient nation... [and] sums up the history of the Old Testament.” A similar description of Malachi is found in other resources, such as those used in Big Spring ISD where an outline reads, “He explains that the woes of God’s people were because of their unfaithfulness, and foresees the coming of the Messiah who would finally provide the solution to sin.”

In Lindale ISD a discussion of the ancient

Jewish temple in pages submitted from the *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book* traces “man’s progressive development in the places of worship” from “the Altar” to “the Tabernacle”

to “The Temple” to “the Synagogue” to “the Church,” which is described as “the highest step upward in man’s desire to worship.” Christianity

is thus explicitly presented as superior to Judaism and to all other religions.⁵⁴ Handwritten notes on Exodus reflect similar assumptions.

A description of the “Mosaic Covenant” reads: “Did not replace the Abrahamic covenant; did not provide salvation but pointed toward future Messiah; Laws revealed man’s helpless and hopeless state without God.”

In San Angelo ISD a slide from a PowerPoint presentation describes the Pharisees: “They were also known as *Chasidim*, which means *loyal to God*, or *loved of God* – extremely ironic in view of the fact that by His time, they

made themselves the most bitter, and deadly, opponents of Jesus Christ and His message.” Another slide reads, “It is evident that in New Testament times the Scribes belonged to the

sect of the Pharisees who supplemented the ancient written law by their traditions (Matt. 23), thereby obscuring it and rendering it of none effect.” There seems to

In many courses negative portrayals of Jewish leaders from the New Testament function as the primary or even only source of information about them.

be little reason to think that a nuanced answer is expected when one encounters this Corpus Christi ISD test question: “Why did Jesus tell the Jewish leaders: ‘Surely evil men and prostitutes will get into the Kingdom before you do’?” Likewise, a Blanket ISD exam covering John 1–10 asks, “Who did Jesus say was the father of the Jewish leaders?” The answer, drawn from John 8:44, is the devil. Consideration of such deeply troubling verses should be accompanied by extensive consideration of their historical use to justify anti-Semitism, but there is little evidence of such discussions in these courses.

FINDING 10

Biblical stories are treated as literal history.

Few scholars would question that the Bible is an important source for understanding the ancient Mediterranean world, but one finds a wide variety of views in the academic world and in different faith communities about how best to use it for historical reconstruction. Some events described in the Bible can be confidently dated, but historians are uncertain when or if others occurred. Some conservative Protestants, particularly those subscribing to the view of inerrancy described earlier in the report, regard the Bible as completely accurate on matters of history, science, and doctrine; they believe that events – including miracles and accounts of supernatural intervention – occurred just as they are portrayed in the Bible, and that the biblical documents were written by the individuals to whom they are traditionally attributed. Other groups (some of them also Protestants) argue that the historical accuracy of the biblical documents varies, that some biblical books developed over time, and that certain works were not actually penned by the individuals traditionally regarded as their authors. Roman Catholic doctrine explicitly rejects the understanding of inerrancy held by some Protestants.⁵⁵ Needless to say, most Jews do not regard the New Testament accounts of Jesus' pre-existence, virgin birth, atoning death, and resurrection as historically accurate.

Various courts have ruled with striking consistency that depicting the Bible as actual, literal history in a public school classroom crosses the line separating church from state.⁵⁶ Thus, for example, *Gibson v. Lee County* found

“it difficult to conceive how the account of the resurrection or of miracles could be taught as secular history.”⁵⁷ *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County* argued similarly, ruling that public schools cannot teach the Bible “as if [it] were actual literal history.”⁵⁸ Doing so clearly violates the requirement of *Abington v. Schempp* to approach the biblical material in an objective and nonsectarian manner.

Nonetheless, many school districts in Texas treat the Bible as an unproblematic accurate historical source, an approach that would be appropriate and understandable in congregational settings but that is inappropriate in a nonsectarian context. Materials often provide dates for events from Creation to the spread of the early Church, as seen on the Gospel Light Productions and Rose Publishing resources used in Big Spring and Forsan ISDs. Even biblical accounts of supernatural occurrences are regarded as literally and historically accurate, in direct contradiction to various district court rulings. Different scholarly views of authorship are rarely discussed; books are assumed to have been written by their traditional authors. The positions taken on issues such as historicity, dating, and authorship almost always reflect particular theological claims made within some conservative Protestant circles. This problematic observation holds true regardless of whether the course is taught as a social studies, English, or some other type of course.

This historicizing approach is especially evident in the abundant test questions that ask students to demonstrate their memory

of biblical stories. The tone of such questions almost always reflects the assumption that the stories are historically accurate. Though some districts might argue such wording merely reflects an attempt to test mastery of content, such an argument is unpersuasive, especially since few courses – even the many that are titled “Bible History” – seriously examine historical questions raised by biblical accounts. At least one district court has explicitly commented on this approach. According to *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County*, “the daily teaching of the content of a book of religious proclamation does not become secular instruction merely by informing students that the content is only what the Bible says; indeed, for many students, that may well heighten the religious effect of the course.”⁵⁹ Commenting further about the course in question, the court noted that the school “district’s argument that the course can be saved (no pun intended) by prefacing each discussion of a biblical event with ‘The Bible says ...’ or noting that not everyone believes the Bible, is without persuasion.”⁶⁰

Numerous examples of the lack of nuanced treatment of the Bible’s historical accuracy or of a tone of assumed historicity have already been provided in earlier sections of this report. Others include:

- pages from a pre-2005 version of the NCBCPS curriculum from Alvin ISD that ask, “As you read in Genesis 5 of the long life spans of people before the Flood, do you think it is possible that people could have lived that long? Can you think of any reasons why life spans before the Flood could have been longer than today?”
- pages from a pre-2005 version of the NCBCPS curriculum from Brady ISD that compare the arguments for understanding Noah’s flood as a local event or as a world-wide event, coming down decidedly in favor of the latter option,

without considering the possibility that the account is not historical.

- exercises from a pre-2005 edition of the NCBCPS curriculum sent by Brazosport ISD that ask students questions about how long Noah was on the ark and how many animals the ark would hold, including “Approximately how many animals were on the ark the size of a rhesus monkey?”
- the assignment from Brazosport ISD to “study map of Babel. Discuss why Genesis 11 may be the beginning of diverse languages and diverse peoples.”
- the assignment from Corpus Christi ISD to “cite what two historians say about the actual fact of the resurrection.” [The examples of historians’ comments provided to the class appear to all be strong affirmations of the historicity of the resurrection.]
- the video *Genesis, Babel, and the Chinese Language* shown in Forsan ISD that argues that ancient Chinese sources confirm the accuracy

of the story of the Tower of Babel.⁶¹

Even districts that do tackle historical issues often have mixed success. Alvin ISD assigns, in addition to the NCBCPS curriculum, Werner Keller, *The Bible*

“Because Jesus did rise, there is a human being in heaven interceding for those who believe in him as the sacrifice for their sins.” – From a course discussion of the Biblical story of Jesus’ resurrection

as History, 2ND rev. ed. (New York: Bantam, 1980) as a textbook for the “Old Testament” portion of its course. Though dated and at times idiosyncratic, this edition of Keller’s book does not have an overt sectarian agenda; it discusses ways in which the archaeological record both confirms and challenges the historical accuracy of biblical accounts.⁶² For the semester on the New Testament, however, Alvin relies on Gundry’s New Testament textbook with problematic results, as demonstrated by the following test questions:

- “What questions would a truly scientific attitude will keep open the possibility

of supernaturalism and test the claims to supernatural events in past history? [sic]" [intended answer, from Gundry, pp. 115–116: "A truly scientific attitude will keep open the possibility of supernaturalism and test the claims to supernatural events in past history by searching questions: Were there eyewitnesses? If so, was their number sufficient and their character and intelligence trustworthy?... Questions like these put the claims of other religions to supernatural events in a poor light, the claims of Christianity in a favorable

light... Thus the claim of other religions to the miraculous does not at all undercut Christianity's similar claim when both are tested by the tools of historical research in an open-minded way."]

- "Explain the Excursus on the Resurrection of Jesus." [The excursus in Gundry, pp. 117–119 begins with "That Jesus really did rise from the dead is supported by the shortcomings of alternative possibilities" and ends with "Because Jesus did rise, there is a human being in heaven interceding for those who believe in him as the sacrifice for their sins."]

ADVOCATING AN IDEOLOGICAL AGENDA



FINDING 11

Bible courses are used to promote so-called “creation science” and other forms of pseudo-science.

In several cases teachers incorporate so-called “creation science” directly into their Bible courses. Such materials are clearly sectarian, and one can imagine no reason for introducing such materials other than to buttress the religious belief of biblical inerrancy held by some Protestants. When presented as genuine science, these materials are no more appropriate in Bible classes than in science classes.

Brady High School, for example, has followed the suggestions of the NCBCPS and shown a creation science video on Noah’s flood produced by the Creation Evidence Museum in Glen Rose, Texas, an organization that advocates belief in a six-day creation, a 6000-year-old earth, and the coexistence of dinosaurs and humans. It has accepted donations to construct a biosphere intended to replicate the atmospheric conditions prevalent before Noah’s flood.⁶³ Not content just to show students the Creation Evidence Museum’s video, Brady High School has also hosted Carl Baugh, the founder of the museum, as a guest lecturer.⁶⁴ Baugh identifies himself with the academic title of “Doctor,” but his doctorate (in education, not the sciences) was granted by Pacific International University,⁶⁵ an unaccredited distance learning program of which Baugh himself is now president. One investigation of Baugh has demonstrated that his academic credentials are difficult to verify and that his claims about them have changed over the years.⁶⁶ Brady High School has also apparently followed the NCBCPS recommendation of presenting the well-known and completely discredited urban legend about

NASA’s supposed discovery of a missing day in time as factually accurate.⁶⁷

Another school district that uses the NCBCPS materials, Celina ISD, discussed a problematic unit in the curriculum that contained erroneous discussions of Earth’s weather patterns drawn from evangelist Grant Jeffrey’s book, *The Signature of God*.⁶⁸ One wonders what the intended response is to a Celina ISD assignment: “Using your notes on the Flood stories, compare your research to the Biblical account. What is one explanation of the differences and why does every culture have a Flood story?”

It is likely that other NCBCPS schools in Texas have taught creation science in their classrooms. The problem is not limited to schools that use NCBCPS materials, however. In a recent school year, the Forsan High School Bible class spent two days watching the video *Dinosaurs and the Bible*,⁶⁹ produced by Creation Science Evangelism.⁷⁰ The course objective for those days is to “show agreement with Biblical record and paleontological discoveries.” An additional day is devoted to a video identified as “Eden and 800-year old men,” which is probably *The Garden of Eden*, produced by the same company. That day’s objective is characterized as: “Are there possible scientific explanations for long-lived humans in biblical times?” (See figure E on page 38.) Approximately half of the questions on a test over “Creation and Genesis Chronology” are devoted to the “young earth” theories of Kent Hovind, founder of Creation Science Evangelism. These include:

- According to Dr. Hovind's theory, an _____ struck the earth, causing a global flood.
- According to Dr. Hovind, fossilization can take place very *slowly* / *quickly*. (circle the correct answer)
- Give two examples of rapid fossilization.
- ATDH (according to Dr. Hovind) which of the following can explain fossil stratification (layers) in a flood situation? (circle 4 correct answers)
Age/Mobility/tv ads/Body density/
Hair color/Intelligence/Habitat

A different test on Genesis asks:

Which of the following is not a proof that dinosaurs lived after the Flood?

- cave paintings by early native Americans
- dinosaur engravings around Bishop Bell's tomb at Carlisle cathedral in Britain
- Barney
- Bible description of Leviathan and Behemoth
- Fossil footprints

Forsan ISD students have also watched *Raging Waters: Evidence of the Genesis Flood in Australia*.⁷¹

Creationism is not the only pseudo-science brought into Bible course classrooms; race

theory also sometimes makes an appearance. In the Amarillo school district, students have been shown an overhead transparency entitled "Racial Origins traced from Noah," which argues that various races are descended from Noah's sons (cf. Genesis 10). According to the chart, "Jews, Semitic people, and Oriental races" are descended from Shem; "African races" and Canaanite nations from Ham; and "Western Europeans" and "Caucasians" from Japheth. These ideas have a particularly troubling past in American history. The belief that Africans, like Canaanites, descended from Ham figured prominently in nineteenth-century defenses of slavery and has often been cited as evidence of the racial inferiority of African Americans. An example of the deeply troubling ways this theory can still be used is provided by a course formerly offered in Mesquite ISD, where the teacher, a local minister, reportedly taught students that "Europeans, Africans and Semitic peoples all descended from the three sons of Noah after the flood, and that each group had its own racial characteristics, such as philosophical thought for Europeans and skill at hunting and conquering for Africans."⁷² It seems very unlikely that intentional racial prejudices are behind the presentation of this material in Amarillo ISD, but there is no evidence of awareness of its painful and influential legacy, either.⁷³

FIGURE E: Forsan ISD Lesson Plan

Teacher	Felty
Subject	
For Week Beginning:	September 13, 2004
Monday	
Title:	Video: Dinosaurs and the Bible
Method(s):	
Objective(s):	Show agreement with Biblical record and paleontological discoveries
Teks:	
Tuesday	
Title:	Continue Video: Dinosaurs and the Bible
Method(s):	Video
Objective(s):	Show agreement with Biblical record and paleontological discoveries
Teks:	
Wednesday	
Title:	Video: Eden and 800 yr old men
Method(s):	Video:
Objective(s):	Are there possible scientific explanations for long-lived humans in biblical times

FINDING 12

Bible courses are used to further political and ideological agendas, sometimes fostering notions of American identity as distinctively Christian and introducing themes from the so-called “culture wars.”

One of the most serious problems with the NCBCPS curriculum is its advocacy of Christian Americanism (sometimes called “Dominion Theology”), the religious and political ideology that America was founded as and should remain a distinctively Christian nation, with “Christian” understood to indicate certain forms of Protestant fundamentalism.⁷⁴ Thus, multiple editions of that curriculum have included a unit espousing the erroneous argument that the (Protestant) Bible served as the primary inspiration for the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other founding documents. (See Appendix Four.) Alvin, Mineral Wells, and possibly Celina ISDs have covered this unit, and it is likely that other schools using NCBCPS materials have as well.

Some schools show Christian Americanist videos produced by WallBuilders, an Aledo, Texas-based company devoted to dismantling the separation of church and state. The owner and president of WallBuilders, NCBCPS board member David Barton, is a well-known political activist but has no training in history beyond a bachelor’s degree from Oral Roberts University. Mineral Wells ISD, whose course is ostensibly an English elective, shows two WallBuilders videos, *Foundations of American Government* and *The Spirit of the American Revolution*. The former argues that the Founding Fathers intended to establish a Christian nation and that increases in sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancies, divorces, and violent crimes can be attributed to the Supreme Court’s advocacy of church-

state separation in *Engel v. Vitale*, the 1962 case prohibiting state-sponsored prayer in public schools. *The Spirit of the American Revolution* is characterized on the WallBuilders Web site with the following description: “Discover the spirit that motivated the Founders to risk all to establish a new nation, and witness their faith in God.”⁷⁵ Mineral Wells also makes available to its students Barton’s book, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, & Religion* (Aledo: WallBuilders, 1996), as well as a work by D. James Kennedy, *What They Believed: The Faith of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln* (Ford Lauderdale, FL: Coral Ridge Ministries, 2003). Kennedy, well-known for his leadership of Coral Ridge Ministries in Florida, is one of the most vocal supporters of the NCBCPS and one of the staunchest advocates of Christian Americanism. Belton ISD shows the WallBuilders video *America’s Godly Heritage*, a lengthy predecessor of *Foundations of American Government* that has similar arguments, supplemented with additional material such as the claim that God intervened during the French and Indian War to save George Washington’s life. The video is so inaccurate in its content and so unabashedly sectarian in its goals that one federal district court has prohibited its classroom use.⁷⁶

Test questions sometimes imply the notion that America has fallen from its historically biblical roots. Two examples on tests in Alvin ISD reflect the common Christian Americanist notion that America has entered into a period of social decline since the Supreme Court decisions

FIGURE F: Midterm Exam from a Bible Course in Blanket ISD

1. Choose a side on the Christmas debate. Should our country celebrate Christmas which is the celebration of the birth of Jesus? Make a compelling case for one side.
2. Should the Bible be taught in Public Schools?
3. In your opinion, what is the greatest problem in our society today?
4. Do you think it is important for teenagers to go to church? What about children? What about adults?
5. What should be the role of churches in our country? Are churches fulfilling this role that you have outlined?
6. Should all the major religions be taught in school? If so, should students be expected to study that religion's book? If not, how can you justify studying the Bible in our school but not studying the other religious texts?

on devotional Bible reading and prayer in public schools in 1962 and 1963:

In the United States we are the world's leader in violent crimes and

- a. Divorces
- b. Illegal drug use
- c. illiteracy
- d. all answers are correct

Divorce has been on the decline since 1963.

- a. true
- b. false

In this light, one wonders about the intended answer and pedagogical goal of the following examination question from Mineral Wells ISD:

The reason the Puritans instituted public education in America was to

- a. train ministers
- b. educate the people on Scripture
- c. interpret the Biblical texts for themselves
- d. keep the government from interfering with their religious beliefs
- e. all of these

Similarly, questions on a Blanket ISD examination have little direct pertinence to

biblical studies but suggest that the course has focused on "culture wars" issues, asking students whether Christmas should be observed, what the greatest problem in American society is, whether teenagers should go to church, and what the role of churches should be. (See Figure F.)

A balanced, academically informed discussion of the role of biblical and other religious influences in America's foundation and subsequent history would be an invaluable experience for students, though in a different context than a Bible class. There is no shortage of credible studies of this important subject.⁷⁷ The resources identified above, however, build their arguments upon quotations from the Founding Fathers that are pulled out of context or are, in some cases, spurious. They ignore the very ample evidence that the nation's founders very deliberately incorporated the separation of church and state into our form of government, and they do not reflect the conclusions of the considerable body of research into the topic that legitimate American historians have produced. Their goal is indisputably political: to encourage a notion of American identity that further empowers certain forms of Christianity at the expense of others – and at the expense of non-Christian citizens.

SHOWING THE WAY FORWARD



FINDING 13

A few school districts succeed in teaching about the Bible in public schools in an objective and nonsectarian manner.

The expectation that schools can offer appropriate courses about the Bible is not unrealistic. Three districts managed to avoid many, if not all, of the concerns raised by this report. Aspects of each one's course provide examples of how public schools might teach about the Bible in a legally and academically sound manner that is respectful toward the biblical material and the diverse religious sensibilities of their students.

Cedar Park High School in Leander ISD has offered the one-semester social studies course "The Influence of the Old Testament on American Culture." The course used a pre-publication version of the Bible Literacy Project's textbook *The Bible and Its Influence*.⁷⁸ The preliminary textbook very much has the appearance of a work-in-progress, with occasional lapses in wording or accuracy. Those lapses, however, come across as missteps, not as the result of a permeating sectarian agenda. Though the course title suggests a focus on American culture, the class's scope was actually considerably wider, considering biblical influence on art, music, literature, and politics throughout western (and to a lesser extent, world) civilization. The emphasis on cultural influence helps the course avoid the literalistic readings modeled in many other Texas courses. Likewise, though its title utilizes the Christian language of "Old Testament," Cedar Park's course also shows sensitivity toward differences in Jewish and Christian interpretation. While it describes various religious views, it does not assume or advocate them. The instructor

had at least some academic background in the area, having taken a college course on "Religion and American Culture." Internal district correspondence shows that administrators made sure that the course's teacher had access to training materials on how to teach the course appropriately.

In North East ISD (San Antonio), Madison High School offers "Literature of the Bible," in which students read selections from the Bible along with selections from secular literature while occasionally considering related art, music, and film.⁷⁹ The primary textbook is the well-received James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*,⁸⁰ and the emphasis, as in Leander ISD, is on the Bible's influence as seen through literary allusions and imagery. Students consider the importance of such imagery in *Moby Dick*, for example. Lesson plans and assignments show the occasional use of first-person language but provide little evidence of an overarching sectarian perspective. Assignments also show an emphasis on analytical skills in addition to content memorization, asking students to compare the creation stories in Genesis and to discuss the literary significance of the different descriptions of the appearances of David and the giant Goliath. Students receive exposure to differences between various Bibles, learning, for example, that some of the prophetic works are grouped together as the "Book of the Twelve" in the Hebrew Bible. Materials reflect an awareness of the fact that Christians have traditionally interpreted passages in the Old

Testament prophetically without suggesting that such interpretations are universal. The course is one of the few in Texas to draw special attention to the importance of women characters in the Bible, treating Deborah, Jael, Susanna, and Esther as “Women of Courage.”

Whiteface Consolidated ISD offers “The Bible as History” and offers some appropriate guidance for an approach that is often troubling. As

noted elsewhere in this report, the People for the American Way study pointed out potential problems raised by such courses, which usually treat the Bible as literal history. In addition, it should be pointed out that Bible history courses place the entire emphasis of the class squarely on an issue, historical accuracy, about which many members of the community might have strong feelings. In general, other rubrics (“Literature of the Bible,” etc.) are probably more appropriate and less potentially problematic. Regardless of the overall rubric chosen, however, many courses will consider historical issues to

some extent, and here Whiteface CISD offers some guidance. Like Alvin ISD, it uses the second edition of Werner Keller’s book, *The Bible as History*. As noted earlier, this book is

Three districts offer examples of how public schools might teach about the Bible in a legally and academically sound manner that is respectful toward the biblical material and the diverse religious sensibilities of their students.

idiosyncratic; if using it as a textbook, the instructor would need more reliable sources for lecture preparation. Despite this book’s limitations, and unlike the Alvin ISD course, Whiteface’s overall approach is relatively objective. Its materials

do not suggest that the teacher intended either to prove or disprove the Bible’s historical accuracy; instead, the course open-mindedly considers examples in which the Bible’s accuracy is easily confirmed as well as passages for which historical questions remain. It also helps contextualize the Hebrew scriptures within the larger ancient Near East by comparing biblical stories with Babylonian, Akkadian, and other texts. Its assignments reflect an emphasis on critical thinking and writing in addition to memorization.

CONCLUSION

As *Abington v. Schempp* declared in 1963, the Bible is definitely worthy of study in public schools for its literary and historic qualities. The challenge is how to teach about it in an objective, nonsectarian manner that neither encourages nor disparages religious beliefs. Materials submitted by Texas schools offering Bible courses suggest that most have not yet figured out how to respond to that challenge. Almost all courses assume and promote (intentionally or not) particular religious views. The following brief recommendations are based upon this report's findings and are offered with the hope that they might help school districts create courses that are both academically and legally appropriate.

1. School districts should adhere to guidelines proposed by the First Amendment Center – *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*.⁸¹ These guidelines have been endorsed by 20 religious and educational groups, including the National Association of Evangelicals, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, and other Christian, Jewish and Islamic organizations.
2. The process by which local school boards decide to offer Bible courses and choose the curricula for those courses should be open and transparent and invite the full participation of parents and other citizens from the community.
3. School districts should make sure that teachers have the appropriate academic background in biblical and religious studies and sufficient training on the legal issues involving the teaching of religion-related courses in public schools. If no such teacher is available within a school's district's staff, then the district should not offer the course until it finds a way to provide sufficient professional development to prepare a teacher for the special challenges of teaching a Bible course. Such training should emphasize, among other things, the ability to recognize sectarian materials and ideas.
4. Classes should avoid relying primarily on sectarian resources for student readings, teacher preparation, videos, and other course components. Course materials surveyed for this study suggest that the religious claims of such resources are often presented to students as statements of fact.
5. School officials should regularly monitor the content of Bible courses to ensure that they are academically and legally appropriate. Special training might be required for administrators to help them recognize inappropriate sectarian elements.

APPENDIX 1: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

PREPARED BY TFNEF STAFF

On August 2, 2005, the Texas Freedom Network Education Fund sent a Texas Public Information Act request to every school district in the state inquiring whether a course on the Bible had been offered at any time in the previous five years. The text of that request appears below:

This request is made under the Texas Public Information Act, Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code. In accordance with the Act, which requires that the Officer of Public Records shall promptly produce such information for inspection or duplication, or both, we respectfully request copies of the following information:

1. A course schedule, course listing or other documents that reflect what courses will be offered in the 2005–2006 school year and/or have been offered in the past five years in your school district, whether required or elective, on the Bible, Bible literacy, Bible studies, the Bible in history and/or literature, or any course in which the study of the Bible is a primary component.
2. A curriculum listing or other document that identifies what textbooks, teachers' workbooks or handbooks, or other instructional or curriculum materials are used in all such Bible courses offered in your district.
3. A copy of the cover, title page and copyright page of all textbooks, teachers' workbooks or handbooks, and other

instructional or curriculum materials used in all such Bible courses offered in your school district.

4. All vendor invoices for all course materials purchased by your district for use in such Bible courses offered in your school district.
5. All communications between your district and the vendor(s) of all course materials purchased by your district for use in such Bible courses, including any vendor advertisements, promotional and marketing materials.
6. The agendas and minutes from any school board meetings or committee meetings during which adoption of a Bible course was discussed.
7. All communications made by the district or received by your district regarding the content, quality and/or legality of any such Bible course offered by your district.

All 1,031 school districts in the state responded to our requests. The TFN Education Fund identified 33 school districts that had taught or offered an elective Bible course at least once since the 2001–02 academic year, including 25 school districts that acknowledged teaching a Bible course during the 2005–06 academic year. A follow-up request for additional information was sent to these 33 districts on November 30, 2005. The text of that request appears below:

This request is made under the Texas Public Information Act, Chapter 552 of the Texas

Government Code. In accordance with the Act, which requires that the Officer of Public Records shall promptly produce such information for inspection or duplication, or both, we respectfully request copies of the following information for courses offered in your district **in the last five years** on the Bible, Bible literacy, Bible studies, the Bible in history and/or literature, or any course in which the study of the Bible is a primary component:

1. copies of **course syllabi and lesson plans** used in all such Bible courses;
2. **tests and quizzes** used in those Bible courses;
3. **all printed handouts distributed to students** in those Bible courses;
4. a list of any **guest speakers** who have made presentations or addressed students in those Bible courses;

5. a list of **videos or other multimedia materials** (including, but not limited to, software, CDs, DVDs, laserdiscs, films, videotapes, slide shows, transparency packages) used in those Bible courses;
6. any **reading list or list of outside resources** provided to students in those Bible courses;
7. the **names, vitae/résumés or list of qualifications** for any individuals who taught or currently teach those Bible courses.

This report is based on responsive documents obtained from 25 school districts that acknowledged teaching a Bible course during the 2005–06 academic year.

APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL EXAMPLES OF SECTARIAN ELEMENTS IN TEXAS BIBLE COURSES

Because districts provided varying amounts of material, some school districts are more fully represented than others in this report. Most of the following examples are questions from quizzes and exams, though some come from lecture notes, study guides, or similar materials. Note particularly the widespread use of inclusive, first-person pronouns (us, we), which imply that God’s ethical demands presented in the Biblical text apply directly to modern students. These examples primarily illustrate the following two points:

1. *The course assumes that students are Christians and that Christian theological claims are true.* All too often in Texas Bible courses, Christian faith claims are presented in a way that implies their factual accuracy. The Christian Bible is assumed to be the principal guide for doctrine and behavior, not only for the Church in all its variations but for students as well. The use of first-person pronouns encourages (sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly) students to incorporate biblical claims into their own belief systems.
2. *The Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament is read through an explicitly Christian lens, often as a set of prophecies that are supernaturally fulfilled in the life of Jesus and the early church.*

For sectarian elements in the materials of schools that use the NCBCPS curriculum, see the discussion of that curriculum in both the main

text and Appendix Four of the present report, as well as in *The Bible and Public Schools: Report on the National Council on Bible Curriculum and Public Schools* (Austin: Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, 2005).

AMARILLO AND PERRYTON ISD

- While reading Genesis 1–3, students are to “begin Messianic prophecy list.”
- A question on a test over Moses asks, “Tell which item in the tabernacle symbolized the following ideas in the New Testament.”
 1. Lord’s Supper
 2. God’s word
 3. Heaven”

BLANKET ISD

- “Put these men of God in order from the oldest to the youngest: Abraham, Adam, Isaac, Joseph, Jacob, Seth, and Jesus.”
- “According to the Lord’s prayer in Luke 11, why should God forgive us our sins?”
- “What are the two ways we must worship God?” [cf. John 4:23]
- “What does the testing of your faith produce?”

CELINA ISD

- “How does the Lord command us to deal with a problem against a brother?” (from Padfield, *Matthew*)
- “What do we owe Caesar?” (from Padfield, *Matthew*)

- “What prophecy was fulfilled as Jesus entered Jerusalem?” (from Padfield, *Matthew* book)
- “Christ was silent at the beginning of the trial. What action from the high priest forced him to speak? What can we learn from this?” (from Padfield, *Matthew*)

COAHOMA ISD

- Materials specify: “Two important points to remember about the prophets: the prophets must be interpreted carefully & *not* made to say more than they were intended to say. Because they use symbolic language, figures of speech & vivid images, they should be understood, *not* as detailed descriptions of the future, but as general revelations of God’s will.”
- “What did Jesus tell us to do to our enemies?”
- “Who gave us the Lord’s Prayer?”

CORPUS CHRISTI ISD

- A test over Gen 1–29 test includes the following question: “Write John 3:16.”
- A True/False question on the “Intertestamental Era Test”: “God had no divinely inspired spokesperson/prophet during ‘The 400 Silent Years’”
- Notes on Deuteronomy 18 read: “THE PROPHET LIKE UNTO MOSES. This unmistakably points to the One Illustrious Individual, the Messiah.”
- “Recognize how the many short stories and events of the Old Testament tie into one main central theme and introduce the New Testament.”
- “_____ wrote the book of Revelation of the Old Testament, foretold about the Savior more than any other prophet except Isaiah.”
- “Describe Jesus’ first recorded miracle as cited in John 2.”
- “To prove his divinity, why didn’t Jesus come down from the cross when the crowd jeered and taunted him?”
- Outline notes on 2 Thessalonians includes “Note: Almost 2,000 years later, we stand

closer to the time of Christ’s return, but we only know that it may happen any day, during the next 10 years, or maybe it is still a hundred years or more away.”

- The following questions are from the teacher’s outline on Paul’s letter to the Romans: “He goes to great length to expound God’s original purpose in giving the Laws of Moses and how the Jews were a part of God’s master plan to bring all nations home through the grace provided by the cross of Jesus Christ.”
- “What can the law do for us?” [3:20]
- “What new way has God shown us to gain heaven?” [3:21–24]
- “What choices do we have?” [6:16]
- “What does the law show us?” [7:7–8]
- “How don’t we understand ourselves?” [7:15–20]
- “How am I freed from this predicament?” [7:25]
- “What should we do with the ability God has given each of us?” [12:6–8]

DUNCANVILLE ISD

- The assigned reading for Genesis from Walker, *Bible Workbook* (vol. 1, p. 4) includes this description of the “Central Character” of the Bible: “The main character of the Bible is Jesus Christ. He is the greatest wonder of the Bible. No other religion offers a living SAVIOR.” The assignment also includes the following questions (p. 8):

The Bible reveals God as a “trinity” (one God yet three persons), God the F____, God the S____ and God the Holy ____.

Notice the pronouns in Genesis 1:26. [The verse reads, “Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness” in the KJV; some Christians argue that the word “us” refers to the Trinity.]

Which person in the Godhead is mentioned in Genesis 1:2?

- “Was the Son of God present in Creation? Read John 1:1–3, Colossians 1:16.”
- “According to the book of Hebrews (in the New Testament) the object lessons [of the

ancient Israelite tabernacle] were designed to teach spiritual truths about whom?” [the intended answer is Jesus; the question occurs on a test over the Exodus experience]

- Notes read: “Other psalms also fall into the category of messianic psalms. Psalm 45 describes Christ’s kingship (Heb. 1:8), while Psalm 110 denotes Christ’s role as Lord of David and our great High Priest (Mt. 22:41–46, Heb. 5:6). The Book of Psalms thus graphically portrays Jesus as son of God, sacrifice for sin, our great High Priest, risen from the dead, King of kings and Lord of lords. And all this was written centuries before his birth.”
- “Which Prophet of the Old Testament spoke of the Promise of the Spirit (Ch 1)?” [in a quiz over the New Testament book of Acts]
- Eight out of a total of twenty questions on a test over Ecclesiastes-Isaiah reflect Christian Messianic interpretation of Isaiah:
 “What kind of sign did the Lord give in Chapter 7?”
 “What sign of the Messiah is given in Chapter 9?”
 “Discuss what you believe Chapter 11:1–5 is revealing.”
 “Who is talked about in Chapter 14:12.”
 “What reference is given to the Messiah in Chapter 28?”
 “How is the Messiah described in Chapter 53?”
 “Describe the ministry of the messiah in Chapter 61.”
 “What does Chapter 65:17–25 discuss?”

FORSAN ISD

- “The book of P____ and the book of I____ contain more prophecies about the Messiah than other Old Testament books.” [intended answer: Psalms, Isaiah]
- “Isaiah’s prophecies about the Messiah are called M____ P____. The amazing thing about these predictions is that Isaiah spoke them ____ years before the Messiah was born.”
- “Psalm 2 is an example of a messianic psalm. This means it is prophetically referring to ____.”
- “Malachi is the ____ book of the Old Testament. After this it seems God was silent for ____ years.”
- “Chapter 9 of Isaiah says the Messiah will be called:
 - i. W____ Counselor
 - ii. M____ God
 - iii. Everlasting F____
 - iv. Prince of P____”
- “When Jesus died the ____ of the Temple separating the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place was torn from top to bottom. This happened in order to show the people that Jesus had now made a way have a relationship with God. No longer were the common people separated and forbidden to go into the presence of God. Now all would have ____ to God through Jesus Christ.”
- “List the three rules about looks and character we learned from Song of Solomon.”
- “Esther becomes a type [prophetic foreshadowing] of the ____, who under direction of Mordecai, a type of the Holy Spirit, totally thwarts the plans of the enemy of God’s people, a type of Satan. Haman had prepared a noose for his arch enemy Mordechai; but the king overruled his plan and Haman is hung on the very gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. What a picture of what Christ did to Satan on the Cross!” [the intended answer for the blank above is “church”]
- A summary sheet titled “Messianic Psalms” is devoted to describing how “many of the psalms specifically anticipate the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, who came centuries later as the promised Messiah.”
- An exercise on the Psalms reads, “It should be noted that there are several places in the

book of Psalms that are ____ concerned with Jesus Christ. (They tell of Jesus coming and ministry)" [*sic*]

- A worksheet on Isaiah reads, "In Isaiah 53 we see a picture of the Messiah, Jesus Christ as painted and described by Isaiah. The Messiah's ____ appearance is described in verse 2. The Messiah's suffering and ____ are portrayed in the following verses 3–12. In verse 5, it says that Messiah would be ____ for our transgressions (our sins). After Jesus Christ died on the cross, while He was still hanging on the cross, a Roman soldier took his ____ and pierced the side of Jesus. In verse 6, it predicts that all will forsake the Messiah. ____ years later, when Jesus was arrested all of His disciples forsook him."
- An outline of the creation story reads, "In [chapter one] verse 26 we see the plural used in refering [*sic*] to God. "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness..." It refers again to the Trinity, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Three that are yet One that are God created man and woman."
- "Noah did not have to necessarily gather adult animals to take on the ark. He may well have taken younger animals since they are smaller in size. Scholars estimate that over ____ animals could fit in the ark."
- "The book of Malachi is the ____ book of the Old Testament and it was also the last written. After the book of Malachi, God would be silent for the next ____ years. That silence would be interrupted with the announcement of the Messiah's birth."

GREENVILLE ISD

- "Isaiah refers to Christ as a ____ servant" [the question refers to Isaiah's portrait of the Suffering Servant]
- "Bonus: Who was the son of the Virgin named Immanuel?" [on a test over the book of Isaiah]
- A test over Jeremiah includes the question: "How is Christ referred to in Chapter 23?"

- "If we are ashamed of Christ, He will be ____ of us." [from a quiz over Mark 1–8; the answer is "ashamed"]
- "Jesus said we must become like these to enter his kingdom." [the answer is "children"]
- "If God begins a good work in you, how will it end?"
- "As believers, we are to put on ____, which is the perfect bond of unity." [the answer is "love"]
- "We are saved by grace through ____." [the answer is "faith"]
- "If we lose our life for Christ's sake, we shall ____ it." [the answer is "gain"]

LINDALE ISD

- "After Malachi, God was silent for ____ years."
- "How is Christ prophesied in the books Isaiah, Jonah, the Psalms, or Malachi? Give at least one good example."
- "Why is Isaiah sometimes called a 'miniature Bible?'" [intended answer: it has 66 chapters, just as the Protestant Bible has 66 books; it predicts the virgin birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus as well as the new creation at the end of the age]
- "The book of ____ presents a type of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ." [the intended answer is "Jonah"]
- "Jonah's three day experience in the belly of the fish is a type of ____, ____, and ____ of Christ." [the intended answer is "death, burial, and resurrection"]
- "Isaiah sets forth every aspect of the glory and ministry of Christ: His ____, youth, mild manner, obedience, message, miracles, sufferings, rejection, death, and ____." [the intended answers: incarnation; resurrection and ascension]
- "What should you do when someone strikes you on the cheek? What should you do when someone takes your cloak?" [Cf. Matthew 5:38–42]

APPENDIX 3: CATALOGUE OF RESOURCES USED BY TEXAS SCHOOL DISTRICTS

Keep in mind:

- Many schools allow students to utilize other versions of the Bible than the translation specified as the primary version for the course.
- It is not always possible to determine whether particular resources are used only by the teachers as aids for preparation or if they are made available to students.
- When the NCBCPS curriculum is the primary curriculum for the course, it is listed under “curriculum.” When it is used only as one resource among several, it is listed under “additional resources used.”
- Some schools’ materials included additional online readings or popular press articles that are not included below.
- Not all videos listed are shown every semester.
- For some resources, particularly videos, schools may use different editions than those listed. For many items, no additional bibliographic data was available.

ALVIN ISD

CURRICULUM:

- National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS)

TEXTBOOKS:

- parallel Bible with King James Version and New International Version
- Werner Keller, *The Bible as History*, 2ND rev. ed. (New York: Bantam, 1980)

- Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament*, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1994)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- readings from the New Living Translation of the Bible
- various materials from Teacher Created Materials, Inc.
- readings from Pearl S. Buck, *The Story Bible* (Carmel, N.Y.: Guideposts Associates, 1971), including “The Garden of Eden,” pp. 16–19
- various online readings

VIDEOS:

- *Who Wrote the Bible*, parts 1 and 2 (presumably *Ancient Mysteries: Who Wrote the Bible: Probing the Eternal Mysteries Behind the Origins of the Holy Scriptures* (A & E Network, 1995)
- *Great People of the Bible and How they Lived*
- *Joseph, King of Dreams* (DreamWorks Video, 1999) (animated)
- *In the Beginning*
- *Genesis: The Creation and the Flood* (Five Mile River Films, 1994)
- *Left Behind* (Sony Pictures, 1999)
- *The Bible: A Search for Truth* (Time-Life, 1997)
- *Noah’s Ark*
- *The Search for the Real Mt. Sinai* (2002) (the video profiles the efforts of Robert Cornuke to find Mt. Sinai in Saudi Arabia)

- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)
- *Ten Plagues of Moses*
- *National Geographic's Mysteries of Egypt* (National Geographic, 1998)
- *Foods of the Bible*
- *The Story of Ruth* (20TH Century Fox, 1960)
- *The Story of Esther* (apparently Vision Video)
- *The Visual Bible: Matthew* (Visual International, 1997)
- *The Visual Bible: Acts* (Visual International, 1995)
- *Jesus Christ Superstar* (MCA, 1973)
- *The Gospel of John* (Visual Bible International, 2003)
- *Religions of the World*
- *Charlton Heston Presents the Bible: Genesis* (GoodTimes Home Video)
- *The Bible's Greatest Secrets* (A & E Home Video, 1996)
- *The Real Eve* (Discovery Channel Video, 2002)
- *The Life of Moses* (possibly video of that name by Cathedral Filmstrips, 1963)
- *Daniel in the Lion's Den* (Best Film and Video, 1994); alternatively, could be *Daniel and the Lion's Den* (Turner Home Entertainment, 1986)
- *David* (The Bible Collection, Warner Home Video, 1997)
- *The Apocalypse* (Good Times Video, 2004)
- *Jesus*
- *Ben Hur* (MGM, 1958)
- *The Miracle Maker* (Family Home Entertainment, 2000) (animated)

AMARILLO ISD

CURRICULUM:

- locally produced curriculum

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible

BELTON ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- *The NIV Study Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- transparencies from the organization Walk Thru the Bible (www.walkthrough.org/site/PageServer)

VIDEO:

- *America's Godly Heritage* (WallBuilders, 1989)

BIG SPRINGS

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- charts and outlines from Rose Publishing and Gospel Light Productions

VIDEOS:

- *How the Bible Came to Be* (Gospel Films, 1978)
- *The Bible*
- *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks, 1998)
- *Joseph, King of Dreams* (DreamWorks, 1999) (animated)
- *King David* (Paramount, 1984)
- *Jesus* (Warner Brothers, 1979; now distributed by The Jesus Film Project)
- *Peter and Paul* (Universal, 1981)

BLANKET ISD

RESOURCES USED:

- Walter M. Abbott; Arthur Gilbert, Rolfe Lanier Hunt, and J. Carter Swaim, eds., *The Bible Reader* (Macmillan, 1969)

- NCBCPS

VIDEO:

- *Jesus* (Warner Brothers, 1979; now distributed by The Jesus Film Project)

BRADY ISD

CURRICULUM:

- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, parallel King James Version and New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Walter M. Abbott; Arthur Gilbert, Rolfe Lanier Hunt, and J. Carter Swaim, eds., *The Bible Reader* (Macmillan, 1969)
- James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*, 2ND ed. (Glennville, IL: ScottForesman, 1995)
- Ronald F. Youngblood et al, eds., *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville: Nelson, 1995)
- *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Grand Rapids: World, 1986)
- *Reader's Digest Atlas of the Bible* (Pleasantville, NY: Reader's Digest Association, 1982)

VIDEOS:

- *How the Bible Came to Be* (Muskegon: Gospel Films Video, 1978)
- *Excavating the Bible: Ancient Tunnels of Jerusalem, The Mysterious Mosaic of Galilee* (New York: Powersports Productions, 2000)
- *Excavating the Bible: Deciphering the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Powersports Productions, 2000)
- *Excavating the Bible: Marine Archaeology and Tel Hazor: Searching for Biblical Proofs* (New York: Powersports Productions, 2000)
- *Abraham* (Home Entertainment, 1994)
- *David* (Turner Homer Entertainment, 1994)
- "American Government and Bible"
– apparently *Foundations of American Government* (WallBuilders, 1992)
- *How our Bible Came to Us* (American Bible Society, 1975)
- two videos by the Carl Baugh's Creation Evidence Museum on flood; titles not specified

- *Jacob* (Turner Homer Entertainment, 1994)
- *Joseph* (Turner Homer Entertainment, 1995)
- *Moses* (Turner Homer Entertainment, 1996)
- *Samson and Delilah* (Turner Homer Entertainment, 1996)
- *The Story of the Twelve Apostles* (A & E Television Network, 1999)
- *The Visual Bible: Matthew* (Visual International, 1997)
- *The Visual Bible: Acts* (Visual International, 1995)
- *The Hiding Place* (World Wide Pictures, 1974)
- *Handel's Messiah*
- "video of Promised Land"
- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)
- *Ben Hur* (MGM, 1958)

BRENHAM ISD

No documents yet returned

BRAZOSPORT ISD

CURRICULUM:

- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOKS:

- parallel Bible with King James Version and New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Merrill Chapin Tenney, *Zondervan's Pictorial Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967)
- *Standard Bible Atlas*, 2ND ed. (Cincinnati: Standard Pub. Co., 1959)
- Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24TH ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965)
- Alexander Cruden, *Cruden's Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testament* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1991)
- Nancy Spiegelberg, "I'd like to ask Noah"
- Howard Nemerov, "Cain"
- William D. Edwards, "On the Physical Death

of Jesus Christ,” *Journal of the American Medical Association* 255:11 (1986) 1455–1463 (it is unclear whether students read the original article or its adaptation at “Study on the Physical Death of Jesus Christ” at <http://www.frugalsites.net/jesus/welcome.htm>)

VIDEOS:

- *The Visual Bible: Abraham*
- *The Visual Bible: Jacob and Esau*
- *The Visual Bible: Joseph*
- *Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks, 1998) (animated)
- *The Miracle of Passover* (Berg Productions, 1999)
- *The Visual Bible: Moses*

CELINA ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- parallel Bible with King James Version and New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24TH ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965)
- *HarperCollins Study Bible* (New York: HarperCollins, 1993) (New Revised Standard Version)
- W. E. Vine, *Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996)
- J. I. Packer, Merrill Chapin Tenney, *Illustrated Manners and Customs of the Bible* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997)
- James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*, 2ND ed. (Glennview, IL: ScottForesman, 1995)
- David Padfield, *Joshua: The Conquest of Canaan* (David Padfield: 2000), available at www.padfield.com
- David Padfield, *Judges: Failures, Deliverance, Sin* (David Padfield: 2000), available at www.padfield.com
- David Padfield, *Ruth: A Story of Love,*

Devotion, and Redemption (David Padfield, 2001), available at www.padfield.com

- David Padfield, *Matthew* (David Padfield, 2005), available at www.padfield.com
- David Padfield, *Acts* (David Padfield, 2004), available at www.padfield.com
- Cullen Schippe and Chuck Stetson, *The Bible and its Influence* (Fairfax: The Bible Literacy Project, 2005)
- John Rogerson, *Atlas of the Bible* (New York: Facts on File Publications)
- James Harpur, ed., *Great Events of Bible Times: New Perspectives on the People, Places and History of the Biblical World* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1987)
- Charles F. Pfeiffer, ed., *Baker's Bible Atlas* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003)
- Kendell H. Easley, *An Illustrated Guide to Biblical History* (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003)
- James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*, 2ND ed. (Glennview: ScottForesman, 1995)
- William Harmon and C. Hugh Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, 8TH ed. (Upper Saddle River: Prentice Hall, 2000)
- I. A. Ibrahim et al, eds., *A Brief Illustrated Guide to Understanding Islam* (Houston: Darussalam, 1997)
- Abdul Rahman Al-Sha, *Woman in the Shade of Islam* (Khamis Mushait, Saudi Arabia: Islamic Educational Center, 2000)

VIDEO:

- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)

COAHOMA ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993)

- Max Anders, *30 Days to Understanding the Bible* (Brentwood, Tenn.: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, 1988)
- Bruce Feiler, *Walking the Bible* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2001)
- *Abingdon Bible Map Transparencies* (Nashville: Abingdon)

VIDEOS:

- *Charlton Heston Presents The Bible* (Good Times Home Video)
- *Animated Stories from the Bible* (Nest Entertainment, 1992–1995) (animated)
- *The Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks, 1998) (animated)
- *The Visual Bible: Matthew* (Visual International, 1997)
- *The Visual Bible: Acts* (Visual International, 1995)

CORPUS CHRISTI

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, King James Version or New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, edition unclear)
- Melton Short, *The Old Testament Made Simple* (Clanton, AL: World Impact Ministries, 1994).

DUNCANVILLE ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, King James Version
- Harry Thomas Frank, ed., *Atlas of the Bible Lands*, rev. ed. (Hammond, 1997)
- William Smith, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*, rev. and ed. by F. N. Peloubet and M. A. Peloubet (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1986)
- Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24TH ed., (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965)
- *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* (edition unclear)

- *The Apocrypha* (Iowa Falls: World Publishing)
- Catherine B. Walker, *Bible Workbook*, vols. 1 and 2 (Chicago: Moody Press, 1952)
- *The Koran* (New York: Ivy Books, 1993)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Bill T. Arnold and Bryan E. Beyer, *Encountering the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1999)
- Walter A. Elwell and Robert W. Yarbrough, *Encountering the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books House, 1998)
- Bernard Grun, *The Timetables of History*, 3rd. rev. ed., (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1991)
- *Then and Now Bible Map Transparencies*

VIDEOS:

- *Genesis*
- *The Creation* (Hanna-Barbera's Great Adventure Stories from the Bible) (animated)
- *Joseph* (Turner Home Entertainment, 1995)
- *Noah's Ark* (Hanna-Barbera Productions, 1992) (animated)
- *Cain and Abel* (animated)
- *Abraham* (Turner Home Entertainment, 1994)
- *Jacob* (Turner Home Entertainment, 1995)
- *Moses the Law Maker*
- *Moses* (Hanna-Barbera's Great Adventure Stories from the Bible, 1997) (animated)
- *Samson and Delilah* (Turner Home Entertainment, 1996)
- *Daniel and the Lion's Den* (Hanna-Barbera, 1987) (animated)
- *Queen Esther*
- *Esther* (Trimark Pictures, 1998)
- *Jonah* (Hanna-Barbera Productions, 1994) (animated)
- *Paul the Emissary* (TBN Productions, 1995)
- *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Arts & Entertainment, 2004)
- *The Holy Land* (Reader's Digest Association, 1995)
- *Joshua and the Battle of Jericho*

- *The Philistines*
- *The Power of the Resurrection* (1958)
- *Jesus of Nazareth*
- *Ben Hur* (MGM, 1958)
- *Herod the Great*
- *The Messiah*
- *The Robe* (20TH Century Fox, 1952)
- *Peter*
- *Paul's Journey*
- *Jordan*
- *The Tabernacle* (Smith Foundation)
- *Ruth* (Diamond Entertainment, 1996) (animated)
- *Where Jesus Walked* (Questar, 1995)
- *The Miracles of Jesus* (Hanna-Barbera Productions, 1993) (animated)
- *Rome* (National Syndications)
- *Pilgrim's Progress* (Ken Anderson Films, 1985)
- *The Nativity* (Hanna-Barbera Productions, 1997) (animated)
- *The Messiah: Prophecy Fulfilled* (Kingdom Entertainment, 2002)
- *Peter and Paul* (Gateway Films, 1981)
- *Twelve Apostles* (History Channel, 1999)
- *The Temple at Jerusalem* (Doko Media, 1988)
- *Seven Churches of Revelation* (Blue Skies Productions)

FORSAN ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, New International Version

VIDEOS:

- *Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks, 1998) (animated)
- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)
- *VeggieTales: Dave and the Giant Pickle* (Big Idea Productions, 1997) (animated)
- *VeggieTales: Josh and the Big Wall* (Big Idea Productions, 1999) (animated)

- *VeggieTales: Duke Duke* (Big Idea Productions) (animated)
- *Jonah: A VeggieTales Movie* (Big Idea Productions, 2002) (animated)
- *VeggieTales: Esther: The Girl Who Became Queen* (Big Idea Productions, 2001) (animated)
- *Dinosaurs and the Bible* (Creation Science Evangelism)
- *The Garden of Eden* (Creation Science Evangelism)
- *Genesis, Babel, and the Chinese Language* (Answers in Genesis, 2003)
- *Raging Waters: Evidence of the Genesis Flood in Australia* (American Portrait, 1997)

RESOURCES USED:

- charts and outlines from Gospel Light Productions
- outlines and exercises from Victory Leadership Institute, Morning Star International

GRAFORD ISD

CURRICULUM:

- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible

VIDEOS:

- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)

GREENVILLE ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible

VIDEOS:

- *The Bible*
- *The Fourth Wise Man* (Paulist Productions, 1985)
- *Israel, God's Chosen People* (Christian Productions, 1989)
- *The Miracle of the Cards* (Cloud Ten Pictures, 2001)

- *Tribulation* (Cloud Ten Pictures, 2000)
- *The Climb* (Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 2002)
- *Hometown Legend* (Warner Home Video, 2002)
- *God's Outlaw: The Story of William Tyndall* (Vision Video, 1987)
- *Left Behind* (Sony Pictures, 1999)
- *Left Behind II: Tribulation Force* (Cloud Ten, 2003)
- *David* (TNT, 1997)
- *Resurrection* (Max Lucado, 1999)
- *Revelation* (version unknown)
- *Jeremiah* (version unknown)
- *The Ride* (World Wide Pictures/ Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, 1997)
- *The Visual Bible: Matthew* (Visual International, 1997)
- *The Visual Bible: Acts* (Visual International, 1995)
- *The Gospel of John* (possibly Visual International, 2003)
- *Paul*

HAMSHIRE-FANNETT ISD

RESOURCES USED:

- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOK:

- Insufficient data provided for comment

LEANDER ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- *The Bible and American Civilization: History, Culture, and Character* (Bible Literacy Project, 2004) (preliminary version of *The Bible and its Influence*)

VIDEOS:

- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)
- *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* (Universal, 2004)

LINDALE ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, King James Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- NCBCPS
- *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book: Old Testament* (Dallas: Dallas Public Schools, 1949) and *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book: New Testament* (Dallas: Dallas Public Schools, 1947)
- *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993)

VIDEOS:

- *Abraham*
- *Moses*
- *Joseph*
- *Prince of Egypt* (DreamWorks, 1998) (animated)
- *The Ten Commandments* (Paramount Pictures, 1956)
- *Mesopotamia*

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- NCBCPS
- *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book: Old Testament* (Dallas: Dallas Public Schools, 1949) and *Dallas High Schools Bible Study Course Book: New Testament* (Dallas: Dallas Public Schools, 1947)
- *Nelson's Complete Book of Bible Maps and Charts* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993)

MILLSAP ISD

Insufficient data provided for comment.

RESOURCES INCLUDE:

- Thomas C. Brisco, *The Holman Bible Atlas* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1998)

MINERAL WELLS ISD

CURRICULUM:

- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOK:

- parallel Bible with King James Version and New International Version

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24TH ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965)
- David S. Barton, *Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution, & Religion* (Aledo: WallBuilders, 1996)
- James Kennedy, *What They Believed: The Faith of Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln* (Ford Lauderdale, FL: Coral Ridge Ministries, 2003)
- Herbert Lockyer, *All the Men of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishers, 1967)
- Herbert Lockyer, *All the Women of the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967)
- Victor H. Matthews, *Manners and Customs in the Bible* (rev. ed., Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991)
- James Strong, *The New Strong's Exhaustive Concordance* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1990)
- George Washington, "Farewell Address"
- the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights
- the Declaration of Independence

VIDEOS:

- *Foundations of American Government* (WallBuilders, 1993)
- *The Spirit of the American Revolution* (WallBuilders, 1993)
- *Ben Hur* (MGM, 1958)

NORTH EAST ISD

TEXTBOOK:

- James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*, 2ND ed. (Glennview: ScottForesman, 1995)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Roland Bartel, James S. Ackerman, and Thayer S. Warshaw eds., *Biblical Images in Literature* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1975)
- Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis, James S.

Ackerman, and Thayer S. Warshaw, eds., *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974)

- Alvin A. Lee and Hope Arnott Lee, *The Garden and the Wilderness* (New York: Harcourt: Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1973).
- Alvin A. Lee and Hope Arnott Lee, *The Temple and the Ruin* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973).
- Archibald MacLeish, *J.B.* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985).
- J. S. Smith, *A Passage through the Old Testament: Wisdom Literature and Post-Exile Period* (1998) (available at <http://www.biblestudyguide.org/ebooks-bibleclass/jss-textual-series-OT.htm>)
- Adam Potkay and Monica Brzezinski Potkay, *The Great Good Book: The Bible and the Roots of Western Literature* (Barnes and Noble, 2004) (CD lecture series)

VIDEOS:

- *Abraham: One Man, One God* (A & E, 1994)
- *Cain and Abel* (A & E, 1996)
- *Noah* (A & E, 1995)
- *Joseph: Master of Dreams* (A & E, 1994)
- *Soloman and Sheba* (A & E Biography, 1996)
- *Prophets: Soul Catchers* (A & E, 1994)
- *Queen Esther: Far Away and Long Ago* (A & E, 1994)
- *The Bible's Greatest Secrets* (A & E, 1995)
- *The Philistines* (A & E, 1994)
- *Moby Dick* (TNT, 1998)

PERRYTON ISD

CURRICULUM:

- Amarillo curriculum
- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible

ADDITIONAL RESOURCE:

- George W. Knight, *A Simplified Harmony*

of the Gospels (Nashville: Holman Bible Publishers, 2001)

VIDEOS:

- *Mountain of Fire: The Discovery of the Real Mount Sinai* (Allumination, 2001)
- *The Passion of the Christ* (20TH Century Fox, 2003)
- *The Visual Bible: Acts* (Visual International, 1995)

SAN ANGELO ISD

TEXTBOOKS:

- *NIV: The Student Bible* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996)
- James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*, ed. (Glennview: ScottForesman, 1995)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- Charles F. Pfeiffer et al, eds., *The Biblical World: A Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1996)
- *Reader's Digest Atlas of the Bible* (Pleasantville, NY and Montreal: Reader's Digest Association, 1981)
- Herb Jahn, *The Aramaic New Covenant: A Literal Translation and Transliteration* (Orange CA: Exegeses Bibles, 1996)
- Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24TH ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965)
- Madeleine S. Miller and J. Lane Miller, *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 7TH ed. (New York: Harper & Brothers, Publishers, 1961)
- Fred H. Wight, *Manners and Customs of Bible Lands* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1953)
- Merrill C. Tenney et al, eds., *The Zondervan*

Pictorial Bible Dictionary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1963)

- *The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia of the Living Bible* (Chicago: San Francisco Productions, 1967)
- *The Ultimate Bible Scramble Book* (Uhrichsville, Ohio: Barbour Publishing, 2003)
- Virgilius Ferm, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Religion* (Secaucus, NJ: Poplar Books, 1945)
- Neil S. Wilson and Linda K. Taylor, *Tyndale Handbook of Bible Charts & Maps* (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 2001)
- Tim Dowley, *The Kregel Pictorial Guide to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1999)
- Brad Densmore, *Great Bible Trivia Workout* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003)

SWEETWATER ISD

CURRICULUM:

- NCBCPS

TEXTBOOK:

- Bible, New International Version

VIDEO:

- *Prisoners of Hope* (Vision Video, 2002)

WHITEFACE ISD

TEXTBOOKS:

- Bible
- Werner Keller, *The Bible as History* (2ND rev. ed., Bantam, 1980)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

- various readings from ancient Near Eastern sources

APPENDIX 4: THE CURRICULUM OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON BIBLE CURRICULUM IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS (NCBCPS)

On August 1, 2005, Texas Freedom Network Education Fund released its report *The Bible and Public Schools: Report on the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS)* (www.tfn.org/religiousfreedom/biblecurriculum/).⁸² The report demonstrated that the NCBCPS curriculum had apparently never undergone scholarly review, contained numerous factual errors, was filled with sectarian content, advanced a specific political agenda, and was thoroughly plagiarized. The National Council responded with an August 4, 2005, press release denying its curriculum was problematic and characterizing the TFNEF report as erroneous and produced by “far left, anti-religion extremists” who were promoting “totalitarianism,” becoming “the biggest censor in the state of Texas,” and trying “to ban one book – the Bible – from public schools.” Such charges were ironic, given that the first page of the report specified that “Bible courses taught in a nonsectarian manner by academically qualified teachers can be an enriching part of public education.” Furthermore, Texas Freedom Network’s members include more than 600 clergy who form the Texas Faith Network. The report itself has been endorsed by more than 185 scholars, including Reform, Conservative, and Orthodox Jews; dozens of Roman Catholics; and a wide range of Protestants.⁸³

Documents provided to the TFNEF by Texas school districts reveal that on August 12, only days after the initial release of the TFNEF report, the NCBCPS sent schools teaching

its course a revised edition of its curriculum along with a cover letter explaining the need for a new version. The letter admitted to “a number of minor, inadvertent typographical and citation errors in the printing” and “several passages or references ... [that] were susceptible to being taken out of context or used in an inappropriate manner in the classroom.” Despite its characterizations of the curriculum’s problems as “minor” and “inadvertent,” the letter nonetheless urged schools to “*please discard any previous editions of our curriculum that you may have, and immediately begin the implementation of the attached August 2005 edition*” [the bold font, underlining, and italics are present in the original].

The National Council officially released the new edition in September at a press conference in Washington, D. C., featuring actor Chuck Norris. Most of the curriculum’s changes correspond exactly to the TFNEF’s critiques.⁸⁴ This edition is thus apparently the least sectarian in the National Council’s history, and the council is to be commended for its changes. Unfortunately, despite such revisions, the curriculum still reflects little familiarity with biblical studies and contains significant sectarian elements, and the NCBCPS continues to display a lack of transparency. Most troubling is the curriculum’s continued advocacy of the religious and political ideology of Christian Americanism – the idea that America is a distinctively Christian nation whose laws and policies should reflect the religious views of groups like the NCBCPS and its political supporters.

Materials submitted by Texas school districts for the present report have provided new information regarding the NCBCPS. The NCBCPS markets its curriculum to school districts by arguing that it is used in hundreds of school districts across the United States. As noted in the report's main text, however, use of the NCBCPS curriculum is considerably less widespread than claimed by the NCBCPS. This observation likely holds true not only for Texas but for the remainder of the country as well.

The 2005 TFNEF report noted that the founder of the NCBCPS, Elizabeth Ridenour, a former paralegal, is not known to have any academic background in education or biblical studies. New information has now come to light about Tracy Kiesling, an educator from Brady, Texas, who helped develop the NCBCPS curriculum and who provides teacher training for schools that adopt it.⁸⁵ According to Kiesling's resume, provided to several Texas school districts, she graduated from Angelo

State University in San Angelo, Texas, with a double major in journalism and animal science and later studied at Abilene Christian University to complete her teacher certification. Her

resume lists her teaching fields as journalism, English, and Spanish and notes that she currently operates a trophy game ranch. It provides no evidence of any academic training in biblical, religious, or theological studies. It is thus likely that the NCBCPS teacher training reflects the same lack of grounding in biblical and religious studies that its curriculum does.

TFNEF's report on the NCBCPS also noted difficulties in obtaining pre-2005 editions of its curriculum. No used copies are available online and inter-library loan attempts found none available in any public or academic library in the country. In response to TFNEF's open records request, however, Texas schools provided substantial portions of earlier

editions. An examination of these excerpts reveals that the earlier editions displayed the same types of problems as the 2005 edition: factual errors, Protestant faith claims and an assumed Protestant perspective, advocacy of sectarian resources, creation science, Christian Americanism, and plagiarism.

For example, earlier editions encouraged use of videos and charts from the Creation Evidence Museum (1999, p. 6). The 2003 edition included sections also found in the first 2005 version, "Science and the Bible" and "The Hydrological Cycle of Weather & the Complexity of Weather Patterns," creation science arguments extracted from Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 2002). "Questions for Reflection" on the creation story in Genesis encourage creative defenses of a literalistic reading:⁸⁶

- Some believe Genesis 1 is speaking of six literal 24-hour days. Others believe the 'days' of Genesis 1 refer to long periods of time. Still others think the six "days" of Genesis 1 were separated by long periods of time. What do you think? Compare Genesis 1:31 through 2:3 with Exodus 20:8–11.
- Some have suggested that if the account of God's creation of Eve by taking a rib from Adam were literally true, men today would have one fewer rib on one side than on the other. Is this a valid criticism? If your right finger were amputated, would your children be born without right index fingers?
- Genesis 4:17 speaks of Cain's wife. Where did she come from? Did God create other people besides Adam and Eve? Could she have been a Neanderthal or Cro-Magnon? Or could Genesis 5:4 supply the answer?
- As you read in Genesis 5 of the long life spans of people before the Flood, do you think it is possible that people could have lived that long? Can you think of any reasons why life

Use of the NCBCPS curriculum is considerably less widespread than claimed by the NCBCPS. This observation likely holds true not only for Texas but for the remainder of the country as well.

spans before the Flood could have been longer than today?

- Why is it that most animals [on Noah's ark] would have been represented by one pair? Approximately how many animals were on the ark the size of a rhesus monkey? ... What two problems could have been alleviated by infant animals or hibernating animals?

The emphasis on literal reading of the Bible as historically and scientifically accurate (an interpretive strategy associated with some, though not all, conservative Protestant groups) is seen elsewhere in the book, as well. The 1999 edition's treatment of the Israelites' journey through the wilderness en route to Canaan included a mathematical exercise designed to answer the question "How much manna did the Israelites eat?" (p. 80). The 2003 and 2004 editions included the unit "The Dead Sea Scrolls & Other Archaeological Finds," taken largely from Jeffrey's book *The Signature of God*. TFNEF's 2005 report discussed in detail the unit's factual errors and sectarian claims. Earlier editions, like the 2005 edition, assume a Christian perspective. The 1999 edition, for example, asked, "Can you imagine what the

world would be like today if Adam and Eve had not given into the serpent's temptation?" (p. 31) and stated, "In biblical days, dreams were often God's way of revealing the future to someone" (p. 57, in the context of a discussion of the biblical character Joseph).

Earlier editions also display a Christian Americanist agenda. The 1999 version included a section entitled "Documents of Freedom" that included the Constitution, Bill of Rights Amendments 11–27, the Declaration of Independence, and Washington's Farewell Address. All high school students and, in fact, all American citizens should be familiar with these important documents. The curriculum's purpose in presenting them, however, is to argue that their composition was inspired by the Christian Bible and that their authors intended to found a distinctively Christian nation. The 1999, 2003, and 2004 editions include a unit primarily devoted to Christian Americanism that is similar to units found in the two 2005 editions. Earlier versions also advocate use of historically inaccurate videos and other resources from the Christian Americanist company WallBuilders, whose goal is to eradicate the separation of church and state.

APPENDIX 5: THE BIBLE AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES

PREPARED BY TFNEF STAFF

The Texas Freedom Network Education Fund surveyed education officials in all states and the District of Columbia to determine what policies and guidelines exist outside Texas regarding instruction about the Bible in public schools. The TFN Education Fund received responses from 43 states and the District of Columbia. As this report goes to press, no responses have been received from officials in Arkansas, Illinois, Maine, Nevada, North Carolina, South Dakota and Wisconsin.

Officials in each state received the following questions:

1. Does your state have a policy regarding courses on the Bible in public schools?
 - a) Are local schools permitted to offer such courses?
 - b) Does the state set any rules or standards regarding those courses?
 - c) May we obtain documents outlining those rules or standards?
 - d) How long have public schools in your state taught Bible courses?
 - e) If your state has no policy on teaching the Bible in public schools, has a statewide policy been considered?
2. If the state permits schools to offer such courses, are the courses elective or required?
 - a) At what grade levels may they be taught?
 - b) May students receive credit toward graduation requirements by taking this course?

c) What standards must the course meet for students to receive credit toward graduation?

3. Does the state track which schools offer Bible courses?
 - a) If so, how many schools in the state offer such a course?
 - b) Does the state track elective courses that students may use to earn credit toward graduation?

Education officials in many states acknowledge that courses with references to the Bible may be offered at the discretion of local districts or schools. Most officials reported, however, that their states do not have explicit policies or guidelines on how to design such courses, and very few states track these courses. Students in most states in which Bible courses are offered may receive elective credit for those courses. Many state officials said they *assume* that local districts teaching the Bible in the context of literature or history adhere to guidelines established by federal courts for such courses. Without formal accountability systems in place, however, it is difficult to know how students in public schools across the country are being instructed on the Bible.

Below are 14 states that either have or have considered policies and guidelines of some kind related to instruction on the Bible in public schools. Only a few of these states have any system in place to track the number of schools offering courses specifically about the Bible.

The **Alabama** Legislature rejected a 2006 Bible literacy bill that would have authorized public schools to offer an elective course called “The Bible and Its History” based on a textbook of the same name, published by the Bible Literacy Project. The class would focus on the Bible’s influence on Western culture. Alabama Democrats wrote and supported the bill. Two Republican lawmakers opposed the bill because they said they prefer Bible literacy courses designed by the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools.

California schools require that students acknowledge the importance of all major religions in human history and provide a history and social science framework. Students are expected to become familiar with the basic tenets as well as historical, moral and ethical traditions of the major religions. With respect to the Bible, the framework encourages teachers to use the Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament to examine Christianity’s continuity with Judaism as well as the two religion’s differences based on Christians’ belief that Jesus of Nazareth fulfilled Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah.

Florida schools may offer two Bible-related classes, “Introduction to the Bible I and II,” as literature courses. These courses comply with a state statute that gives public schools the authority to offer “a secular program of education including, but not limited to, an objective study of the Bible and of religion.” These courses require students to analyze the Bible’s literary components, to consider the impact of the Bible on Western culture and to consider how biblical literature becomes sacred scripture.

In 1997, concerned parents in Florida went to court to oppose a local school board’s adoption of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools’ flawed course materials. The board had adopted the materials for two courses, one on the “Old Testament” and one on the “New Testament.” In *Gibson v. Lee County School Board*, 1 F. Supp. 2d 1426 (M.D. Fla. 1998), a federal court issued a temporary injunction against use of the “New Testament”

curriculum and required strict monitoring of the “Old Testament” course. The school board later replaced both curricula with a more objective Bible course.

In 2006 the **Georgia** Legislature passed a bill establishing elective courses for high school students called the “History and Literature of the Old Testament Era” and the “History and Literature of the New Testament Era.” The Bible is the only required textbook for these courses – a policy shared by many Texas public schools and a source of many of the problems noted in this report. The new Georgia law also requires the state to fund these Bible courses. The National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools strongly backed the Georgia statute. Georgia also allows students to enroll in off-campus religion courses for credit.

The **Indiana** Administrative Code has allowed public schools to offer a course called “Biblical Literature” since 1990. The course examines the Bible as a source of a wide variety of literary patterns, themes and conventions, and provides a basis for understanding Biblical references in classical and modern literature. Students who complete the course receive one credit out of the required eight credits in English/Language Arts. During the 2004–05 school year, seven teachers from around the state offered the course, and the state reported a total course enrollment of 856 students.

The **Kentucky** Department of Education does not have any specific policies that relate to Bible-based courses. On the other hand, a Kentucky state statute allows teachers to discuss the Biblical story of creation when teaching students about the theory of evolution. According to the statute, teachers may “read such passages in the Bible as are deemed necessary for instruction on the theory of creation, thereby affording students a choice as to which such theory to accept.”

The **Massachusetts** Department of Education provides local districts and schools with an English Language Arts Framework that recommends stories and passages from the Bible that are frequently alluded to in English literature. Works from the Bible that are listed

in the framework include passages from the books of Genesis, Psalms and Proverbs from the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and the Sermon on the Mount and selected parables from the New Testament.

Mississippi teachers may receive a supplemental “Bible” endorsement (certification). This endorsement signifies that a teacher has completed 21 semester hours of coursework on the Bible and is qualified to teach about the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and the New Testament. One possible course, “World Literature,” in the state’s Language Arts Framework includes the study of Bible passages as part of a discussion of Hebrew literature. Those passages include the stories of Samson and David and Goliath and parts of the books of Psalms and Ecclesiastes.

In 2005 the **Missouri** Department of Education began informally tracking courses on the Bible and found that seven high schools in five school districts offered courses on “Bible literature.” The Missouri Legislature is currently considering a bill that would allow public schools to offer courses that teach the Bible. The necessity of the bill has been questioned, however, as many schools in Missouri already offer courses that include the Bible or portions of it.

The **Rhode Island** General Assembly considered a bill that would have required reading the Bible in public schools in 1926. Many school superintendents opposed the bill, arguing that a law should never compel religious observances. The Rhode Island Department of Elementary and Secondary Education currently allows local schools to offer courses on the Bible so long as the classes and instructional materials meet constitutional standards.

The governor of **South Carolina** approved the Released Time Credit Act in 2006, which allows students to leave campus to attend religion classes. Students taking such courses may receive as many as two elective credits for graduation. Most of the courses are taught at churches. The law assumes that local school districts will review course content and teacher

certification before they award credits for the class. Prior to passage of the law, nearly 6,500 students participated in off-campus religion courses, without receiving graduation credit for them.

South Dakota’s language arts reading standards suggest a core list of literary materials. Under this framework, the Bible is categorized as “religious literature” along with the Koran, Buddhist scripture and other religious works. The framework offers a disclaimer that the books on this list “are only suggested readings and should not be construed to suggest promotion of any religious teachings.”

The **Tennessee** Department of Education has tracked courses on the Bible in local districts and schools since 2002. Between 2002 and 2005, four school systems offered “Bible History” or “Biblical History” courses. During the 2005–06 school year, apparently, no school systems or high schools offered any courses regarding the Bible. The Tennessee General Assembly is currently considering a bill that would allow every four-year high school the option of offering an elective course in the history and literature of the Bible. According to the bill, the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and the New Testament would be used as textbooks. Local school boards and students could decide which versions/translations of the Bible to use. The language of this bill is similar to legislation that the Georgia Legislature passed in 2006.

In 1995 the **Virginia** State Board of Education adopted “Guidelines Concerning Religious Activity in Public Schools.” According the guidelines: “Religious symbols or religious texts, such as the Ten Commandments, may not be posted in the public schools when the purpose or primary effect is to advance religion, but may be posted on a temporary basis as part of an academic lesson or curriculum. The public schools, however, may properly teach students important values, ethics and morality, but not through religious indoctrination. The Ten Commandments, the Bible, as well as other religious materials may be studied for bona fide educational purposes.”

APPENDIX 6: SAMPLE STUDENT EXERCISES

This appendix includes samples of student exercises in Texas public school Bible courses. School districts submitted these materials to the TFN Education Fund or posted them on their Web Sites.

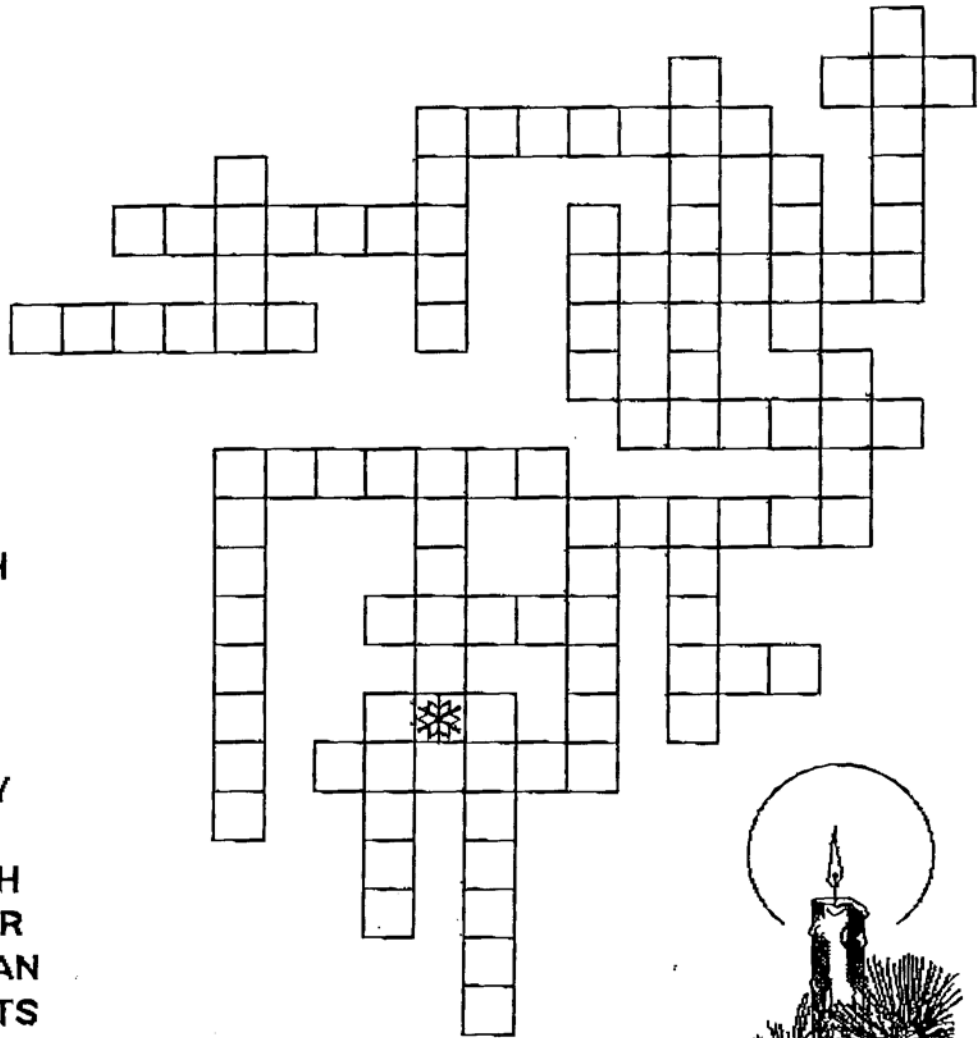
FROM BELTON ISD:



Christmas Crossword

Make all the words fit into this crossword.
Each word is only used once.

ELF
TOY
GIFT
BELL
TREE
STAR
SANTA
COMET
CUPID
VIXEN
CANDY
FROSTY
WREATH
DASHER
DONNER
SLEIGH
DANCER
CHIMNEY
BLITZEN
RUDOLPH
PRANCER
SNOWMAN
PRESENTS
REINDEER



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- ____ 19. The name of Hagar's son. S. Abraham
- ____ 20. A token of God's covenant with Abraham. T. Abram's sister

B. FILL IN THE BLANK.

- ____ 1. When Hagar became pregnant Sarai began to complain that Hagar _____ her.
- ____ 2. During a conflict between the kingdoms of Canaan, Lot was captured, requiring Abraham to _____ him.
- ____ 3. When Pharaoh realized that Abram had tricked him, he asked Abram why he had told him that _____ was his sister, and then he sent them away.
- ____ 4. God promised Abram that his descendants would be a great _____.
- ____ 5. Abram was _____ years old when Hagar had Ishmael.
- ____ 6. The meaning of Abraham is _____.
- ____ 7. The meaning of Isaac is _____.
- ____ 8. The meaning of Ishmael is _____.
- ____ 9. The reason Sarai laughed about having a child.
- ____ 10. Abraham's servant.

Sarai	laughter	nation	father of nations
God hears	despised	rescue	86
old age	Eliezer		

C. SHORT ANSWER. Answer *three* of the following questions. Use specific examples.

1. How is the Bible's honesty a good reason to believe what the Bible says?
2. The miracles of the Bible are considered an argument for its credibility. Name one of the miracles in the Bible.
3. How is the unity of the Bible a good reason to believe it?
4. What does it mean to say that the Bible is endorsed by Christ?
5. Explain how the survival of the Bible makes it believable.



Bible A1

1/20/05

TEST ON EPHESIANS 6:10-12 NIV

(0) (100)

Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His Mighty

Power. Put on the full Armor of God so that

you can take your stand against the Devil's Schemes

For our Struggle is not against flesh and blood

but against the rulers, against the authorities, against

the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual

forces of evil in the Heavenly Realms

APPENDIX 7: THE BIBLE COURSE OF BRENHAM INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

Materials from Brenham ISD arrived too late for inclusion in the original edition of this report but are summarized in this updated version. In many respects, Brenham's course is typical: it is well organized and reflects considerable preparatory effort on the part of the instructor. Many of its elements are unobjectionable. Often, however, it displays the same types of problems found in most other Texas Bible courses.

TEXTBOOKS:

Bible
concordance

The following examples drawn from the course primarily illustrate the following two points:

1. *The course assumes that students are Christians and that Christian theological claims are true.* As is often the case in Texas Bible courses, Christian faith claims are presented in a way that implies their factual accuracy. The Christian Bible is assumed to be the principal guide for doctrine and behavior, not only for the Church in all its variations but for students as well. The use of first-person pronouns encourages (sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly) students to incorporate biblical claims into their own belief systems.
2. *The Hebrew Bible/ Old Testament is read through an explicitly Christian lens, often as a set of prophecies that are supernaturally*

fulfilled in the life of Jesus and the early church.

- An outline titled "Bible (Some General Facts)" includes "Word of God. 1. Contains the word of men guided by a power not themselves (Psalms 39:2f). 2. Men moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:20)" and "Divisions. A. Old Testament. 1. History. 2. Law. 3. Poetry. 4. Prophecy. B. New Testament. 1. Biography. 2. History. 3. Epistles. 4. Prophecy."
- A matching question on a test over Genesis asks: "God told me he would make me crawl on my belly and that Jesus would crush my head." The intended answer is "Serpent."
- A test over Joshua, Judges, and Ruth asks: "Explain how the initial battles in the Book of Joshua show that victory comes through God's power but it demands man's obedience."
- Another question on the same test asks: "How does Boaz' role as redeemer kinsman from the Book of Ruth compare to Christ as redeemer?"
- An outline on the books of Judges and Ruth describes the biblical judges as "Typical--as deliverers, they were types of Christ."

- A discussion of prophecies regarding the dynasty of King David reads: “2 Sam. 7:14-16 is a dual fulfillment prophecy. Its near fulfillment was in Solomon. Its far (and complete) fulfillment was in the comparable Son of God.”
- An outline of “Important lessons” drawn from 2 Samuel summarizes: “None is so privileged or powerful as to be immune to temptation (1 Cor. 10:12). Sin always brings worse consequence than one can anticipate (Jas. 1:15, Hos. 8:7). One sin leads to more sins. God’s forgiveness is abundant and free. A forgiven person may still suffer bitter consequences of a sinful past.”
- A test on the “Life of Jesus” asks: “Discuss the teaching Jesus gave to Nicodemus in John 3. How do we apply this to our lives?”
- A test over Matthew asks: “Discuss the temptation of Christ in the desert. How did Jesus resist the devil? How can we learn from this today?”
- A test over Mark and Luke asks: “What kind of faith do we need to move mountains?”
- A PowerPoint presentation on the resurrection of Jesus explicitly attempts to

persuade students of the historical accuracy of the resurrection accounts. One slide reads:

“Christ’s resurrection was an event that occurred in time and space — that it was, in reality, historical and not mythological (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16). The importance of this event cannot be minimized, for Jesus Himself proclaimed that His resurrection would prove His power over death, and thus His deity (John 2:18-22). Not only that, but Christ’s resurrection is the very heart of the gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-4).” Another slide argues that proof of the historicity of Jesus’ resurrection is provided by the Gospels’ accounts of his appearances and of his followers touching his body. Still others refute what the presentation calls “Resurrection Myths,” such as “Body Stolen by Romans”; “Body Stolen by Jewish Leaders”; “Body Stolen by Disciples”; and Swoon Theory.” All of these explanations, the presentation argues, are unpersuasive. The conclusion that slide show prompts students to draw is obvious: the resurrection of Jesus is an unassailable historical fact.

- “Read Romans 12:1-2. What does this mean? Explain what changes will occur if this scripture is truly applied to one’s life?”

ENDNOTES

1. *Gibson v. Lee County School Board*, 1 F. Supp. 2d 1426 (M.D. Fla. 1998). The ruling is online at http://www.aclufl.org/legislature_courts/legal_department/briefs_complaints/leedecision.cfm.

2. <http://www.ganet.org/ago/read.cgi?searchval=Bible&openval=99-16>.

3. *The Bible and Public Schools: Report on the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools (NCBCPS)* (Austin: Texas Freedom Network Education Fund, 2005), available at www.tfn.org/religiousfreedom/biblecurriculum/.

4. James Jewell, "Georgia to Teach Bible: Democrats and Republicans Disagreed About What to Use as a Textbook," *Christianity Today*, June 2006 (<http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/006/12.19.html>).

5. See the "Board of Directors/Advisory board" link at <http://www.bibleinschools.net/sdm.asp>.

6. *Abington School District v. Schempp*, 374 U.S. 203 (1963).

7. *Crockett v. Sorenson*, 568 F. Supp. 1422 (W. D. Va. 1983).

8. The Bible Literacy Project and the First Amendment Center, *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide* (New York: Bible Literacy Project, Nashville; First Amendment Center, 1999), available at <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/about.aspx?id=6261>.

9. *Wiley v. Franklin* 468 F. Supp. 133 at 150 (E. D. Tenn. 1979); cf. the similar language at *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District*, 933 F. Supp. 582 at 592 (N.D. Miss. 1996).

10. *Wiley v. Franklin* 474 F. Supp. 525 at 531 (E. D. Tenn. 1979).

11. *Wiley v. Franklin* 468 F. Supp. at 151.

12. *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District*, 933 F. Supp. at 595.

13. *Gibson v. Lee County* 1 F. Supp. 2d at 1433, citing *Vaughn v. Reed* 313 F. Supp. 431 (W. D. Va. 1970); see http://www.aclufl.org/legislature_courts/legal_department/briefs_complaints/leedecision.cfm

14. Kit Wagar and Tim Hoover, "Social Issues Top

Agenda: 'It's Time to Get Back to Basics,'" *Kansas City Star*, March 12, 2006, suggests that Missouri has had no classes devoted specifically to the Bible but has allowed its study in comparative religion and literature courses: "In 2004, 33 Missouri school districts used the Bible in class. In 2005, 19 districts reported using the Bible: 16 districts had 573 students enrolled in comparative religion classes, and three districts reported 211 students in Bible as literature courses." In Tennessee, five districts have recently had Bible courses approved by the state since 2002–2003 and others may exist as "general specialty courses," according to the side bar for Claudette Riley, "Bible-Class Debate Focuses on Using Bible as Sole Text: Legislative Effort Seeks State Role in Course Content," *Hendersonville Star News*, May 22, 2006.

15. People for the American Way, *The Good Book Taught Wrong: Bible History Classes in Florida Public Schools* (2ND printing, 2000), available at <http://www.pfaw.org/pfaw/general/default.aspx?oid=1345>.

16. See also David Levenson, "University Religion Departments and Teaching about the Bible in Public High Schools: A Report from Florida," *Religious Studies News: AAR Edition* 17 (March 2002), 3, 7, 10, online at <http://www.aarweb.org/teaching/ris/publications.asp> and republished at *SBL Forum* (<http://www.sbl-site.org/Article.aspx?ArticleId=198>). The Florida guidelines for the newly created Bible courses are included in the People for the American Way report.

17. See Appendix 1 for a copy of TFNEF's letter, which clearly requests materials from all Bible courses taught in public schools, not just from courses directly funded by taxes.

18. Theoretically, a course might advance the theological claims of other groups, such as "mainline" Protestants, various branches of Judaism, the Roman Catholic Church, or Eastern Orthodox churches. The materials submitted by school districts provide no evidence that any such course is being taught anywhere in Texas.

19. Staci Semrad, "Anson to Study Interest in Bible Class," *Abilene Reporter-News*, May 16, 2005.

20. <http://www.dripping-springs.k12.tx.us/BOTFolder/minutes2005.html#09.27.05>.

21. See the minutes of the May 12, 2005 and July 19,

2005 school board meetings at <http://www.boardbook.org/apps/bbv2/public/index.cfm?memberkey=0057910> and of the June 17, 2004 meeting at <http://www.gpsid.org/gpsid/communications/boardmeetings/minutes061704.pdf>.

22. Sarah P. Henry, "High School Considers Bible Elective," *Lake Highlands People*, June 9, 2006.

23. On Mesquite ISD, see Joshua Benton, "Take out your Bibles," *Dallas Morning News*, December 1, 2000.

24. A course website is at http://www.brazosportisd.net/bwood/acad_depts/biblehistory/Information.htm.

25. As of August 1, 2006, Brenham ISD had not responded to any of the TFNEF's Open Records Requests (submitted by mail, e-mail and fax), though the school Web site indicated that an elective Bible course was offered there. Materials provided by the school district later in August arrived too late for inclusion in the original report but are discussed in this updated version.

26. The courses in Granbury and Joshua ISDs, offered before the parameters of this study in 1998–1999, were also cancelled because of low enrollment.

27. Ruth Campbell, "Bible Course is Quietly Offered in Big Spring," *Midland Reporter-Telegram*, October 23, 2005.

28. New Braunfels Independent School District Board of Trustees Document, December 19, 2005; see http://www.boardbook.org/apps/bbv2/public/detail_wrapper.cfm?MeetingKey=MTEyOTk%3D#67.

29. Beth Wilson, "A Different Kind of Bible Study," *Amarillo Globe-News*, April 1, 2005.

30. Eva Parks, "Texas Public School Bringing Bible to Classroom," NBC News, April 27, 2005 (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/7656551>); Ginger Pope, "Bible Class Abides in Big Spring," *Odessa American*, April 16, 2005; cf. "Bible Class Board in Need of More Money," *Big Spring Herald*, October 13, 2003.

31. Jennifer Stump, "Lessons Raise Constitutional Questions: Local Survey Class One of the Few left in Texas," *Corpus Christi Caller-Times*, February 4, 1999.

32. Districts were asked to comment on the qualifications of the instructor to teach a Bible course. Most noted areas of certification; many provided resumes and other information. Few noted any *academic* work on the part of the teachers in biblical studies. Some provided their teachers' academic transcripts (edited for privacy concerns) which confirmed a lack of biblical studies course work. Exceptions include Belton ISD, where the teacher took fourteen hours in Bible in college; Graford ISD, where the former teacher had a Bachelor of Biblical Studies from McMurry University; Leander ISD, where the teacher took "Religion and American Culture" at Ball State University; and North East ISD, where the teacher has a Masters Degree in Educational Ministries from Wheaton College. Corpus Christi ISD identified one of its two Bible teachers as a former director at New Life Bible College. At Big Spring ISD, the teacher has Master of Ministry and Doctorate of Ministry from Bethany Theological Seminary (Dothan, Alabama) and is the minister at a Church of Christ in nearby Stanton.

33. See Benton, "Take out your Bibles."

34. Supplemental use of such sources might well be appropriate and useful if their sectarian elements were filtered out before reaching the classroom, but that does not seem to the usual pattern in Texas.

35. Alvin ISD uses the curriculum extensively, but its course is also greatly shaped by its choice of textbooks, described elsewhere in the report.

36. Hamshire-Fannett submitted relatively few materials, making it difficult to ascertain the exact level of use of NCBCPS materials.

37. Though the materials submitted by Duncanville included a page from the 2004 edition of the NCBCPS curriculum, the district says it makes no use of that curriculum. In addition, the other materials the district submitted do not reflect any influence from the NCBCPS curriculum.

38. Cf. <http://www.bibleinschools.net/sdm.asp?pg=nud>, which for months has claimed, "Our curriculum is now in 52 districts in Texas" (accessed for this report on July 5, 2006). Cf. the Council's claim of 52 districts in Ralph Blumenthal and Barbara Novovitch, "Bible Course Becomes Test for Public Schools in Texas," *New York Times* August 1, 2005, and the earlier claim of 49 Texas public school districts in David McLemore, "Elective Bible Courses Prompt Concern," *Dallas Morning News* April 30, 2005.

39. The edition most commonly used is Henry H. Halley, *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 24TH ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1965).

40. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 1965 edition, pp. 20–22; cf. the 2000 edition, pp. 11–13.

41. Gundry is a respected evangelical scholar and his book is an excellent choice for the educational setting for which it was written: Protestant colleges and seminaries. The book's preface makes its theological convictions clear: "The theological and critical perspective of this textbook is evangelical and orthodox" (p. 12).

42. <http://www.walkthru.org/site/PageServer>.

43. Submitted materials included 67 pages from these publishers.

44. The workbooks, all by David Padfield, are found at www.padfield.com. Those used in Celina include *Joshua: The Conquest of Canaan* (2000); *Judges: Failures, Deliverance, Sin* (no date); *Ruth: A Story of Love, Devotion, and Redemption* (2001); *Matthew* (2005), *Acts* (2004).

45. At the end of *Matthew*, for example, the resurrected Jesus beckons to the viewer to come and follow him. While one can appreciate the challenges the producers of this series faced in keeping lengthy verbatim dramatizations lively and engaging, their interpretive choices are occasionally troubling. An example: according to Matthew 27:3–7, after Judas betrayed Jesus, he returned to the temple and tried to return his payment of thirty pieces of silver by throwing them down on the floor, where the priests and elders retrieved them. In the video's vivid depiction of this story, the Jewish leaders throw themselves down upon the floor as well, competing with each other as they eagerly

snatch up the coins. This detail is not found in the gospel; it is the filmmakers' creation. It encourages (one assumes unintentionally) the historically anti-Semitic stereotype of Jews as greedy money-grubbers. A positive way to use such a problematic scene would be to discuss the filmmaker's interpretation and its troubling implications. Another *Visual Bible* movie, *The Gospel of John*, shows far more sensitivity to the treatment of Judaism and begins with an explanatory note on the topic.

46. In addition, Anglicans also accept the additional books found in the Roman Catholic Old Testament.

47. Comparisons of lesson plans from different school years shows that in some cases, the topic has only been recently introduced.

48. Some of these districts also allow students to use other translations, if they choose, but the specified translation remains the primary text.

49. Jack P. Lewis, *The English Bible from KJV to NIV: A History and Evaluation*, 2ND ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 324; see also Bruce M. Metzger, *The Bible in Translation: Ancient and English Versions* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2001), 138–141; Peter J. Thuesen, *In Discordance with the Scriptures: American Protestant Battles over Translating the Bible* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 147–152; and Harry M. Orlinsky and Robert G. Bratcher, *A History of Bible Translation and the North American Contributions* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 217–227.

50. http://www.godonthenet.net/evidence/is_true.htm.

51. http://www.rbc.org/bible_study/ten_reasons_to_believe/reasons/7342.aspx.

52. *The Miracle of Passover* (Berg Productions, 1999). The description from the web site: "Zola explains the origin and significance of the Passover and demonstrates the feast. He also shows how Christ is revealed in the feast and proceeds to tell a 'Christian Love Story'" (http://store.levitt.com/cgi-bin/perlshop.cgi?ACTION=thispage&thispage=video-feasts.html&ORDER_ID=960715028).

53. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, 1965 edition, p. 386.

54. On the treatment of Judaism in the Dallas High Schools Bible Course, see Michael Phillips, *White Metropolis: Race, Ethnicity, and Religion in Dallas, 1841–2001* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006), 122–123.

55. Pontifical Biblical Commission, "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" (1993), at http://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp.htm.

56. Helpful overviews of this issue can be found in People for the American Way, *The Good Book Taught Wrong*, and The Bible Literacy Project and the First Amendment Center, *The Bible and Public Schools: A First Amendment Guide*.

57. *Gibson v. Lee County* 1 F. Supp. 2D at 1434.

58. *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District*, 933 F. Supp. at 600.

59. *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District*, 933 F.

Supp. at 596–97.

60. *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District*, 933 F. Supp. at 596.

61. *Genesis, Babel, and the Chinese Language* (Answers in Genesis, 2003).

62. In this respect, the revised edition differs considerably from the original (New York: W. Morrow, 1956), which was written with the explicit goal of demonstrating the Bible's thoroughgoing historical accuracy.

63. The Creation Evidence Museum (www.creationevidence.org) sells several such videos; it is unclear exactly which one Brady shows.

64. www.creationevidence.org.

65. <http://paci.edu/index/distance-learning.shtml>.

66. Glen J. Kuban, "A Matter of Degree: Carl Baugh's Credentials," *National Center for Science Education Reports* 9:6 (1989): 15–20, with a recently updated version at <http://paleo.cc/paluxy/degrees.htm>.

67. Brady High School's materials included a copy of this urban legend. On the legendary nature of the story, see Jan Harold Brunand, *Encyclopedia of Urban Legends* (Santa Barbara: ABC Clío, 2001), 265–266 and the "Ask an Astrophysicist" section of the website of NASA's Goddard Space Flight Center (http://imagine.gsfc.nasa.gov/docs/ask_astro/answers/970325g.html).

68. Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Signature of God* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 2002).

69. The outline of a week in Fall 2004 is available online at <http://forsan.esc18.net/FeltyRichard/h1.htm>.

70. www.drdino.com/. For a description of the video, see http://shopping.drdino.com/view_item.php?cat=DVDs&id=442.

71. *Raging Waters: Evidence of the Genesis Flood in Australia* (American Portrait, 1997).

72. Benton, "Take Out Your Bibles."

73. See Cain Hope Felder, "Race, Racism, and the Biblical Narratives," in Felder, ed., *Stony the Road We Trod: African American Biblical Interpretation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 127–145.

74. See Fritz Detwiler, *Standing on the Premises of God: The Christian Right's Fight to Redefine America's Public Schools* (New York and London: New York University Press, 1999), 102–130, 250–251; Bruce Barron, *Heaven on Earth? The Social and Political Agendas of Dominion Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992); Chip Berlet and Matthew N. Lyons, *Right-Wing Populism in America* (New York and London: Guilford Press, 2000), 252–264; William C. Martin, *With God on Our Side: The Rise of the Religious Right in America* (New York: Broadway Books, 1996); Sara Diamond, *Roads to Dominion: Right-Wing Movements and Political Power in the United States* (New York and London: Guilford, 1996); Walter A. Capps, *The New Religious Right: Piety, Patriotism, and Politics* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1990), 197–198, 204–210; and June Edwards, *Opposing*

Censorship in the Public Schools: Religion, Morality, and Literature (Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1998), 3–9. I use the term “Christian Americanism” only in the sense described in this report’s main text. For a study of other views of “Christian America” among evangelical Christians, see Christian Smith, *Christian America? What Evangelicals Really Want* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).

75. http://www.wallbuilders.com/Merchant2/merchant.mvc?Screen=PROD&Store_Code=W&Product_Code=Vo8&Category_Code=V.

76. *Herdahl v. Pontotoc County School District*, 933 F. Supp. 582.

77. For more balanced considerations of this issue, see David L. Holmes, *The Faiths of the Founding Fathers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Alf Mapp, Jr., *The Faiths of our Fathers* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2005); Frank Lambert, *The Founding Fathers and the Place of Religion in America* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003); Derek H. Davis and Matthew McMearty, “America’s ‘Forsaken Roots’: The Use and Abuse of Founders’ Quotations,” *Journal of Church and State* 47 (2005): 449–472; Derek H. Davis, *Religion and the Continental Congress, 1774–1789: Contributions to Original Intent* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); and Mark Noll, Nathan Hatch, and George Marsden, *The Search for Christian America* (Colorado Springs: Helmers and Howard, 1989).

78. A revised version is now available as Cullen Schippe and Chuck Stetson, *The Bible and its Influence* (Fairfax, VA: Bible Literacy Project, 2006).

79. North East 1SD’s Reagan High School also offers the course, but it submitted too few materials for evaluation.

80. James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, *The Bible As/In Literature*, 2ND ed. (Glennville, IL: ScottForesman, 1995). Brady 1SD also uses this book, but its course as a whole is less successful in avoiding sectarian elements.

81. <http://www.firstamendmentcenter.org/about.aspx?id=6261>.

82. <http://www.tfn.org/religiousfreedom/biblecurriculum/>.

83. <http://www.tfn.org/religiousfreedom/biblecurriculum/endorsements/>.

84. See Mark A. Chancey, “The Revised Curriculum of the National Council on Bible Curriculum in Public Schools” at *The Bible and Interpretation*, http://www.bibleinterp.com/articles/Chancey_Bible_Curr_Revised.htm; also available at <http://www.tfn.org/religiousfreedom/biblecurriculum/media/revisedcurric/index.php>.

85. Lisa Sandberg, “Small Town Drawn into Culture Wars,” *San Antonio Express-News*, August 15, 2005; Ralph Blumenthal and Barbara Novovitch, “Bible Course Becomes a Test for Public Schools in Texas,” *New York Times*, August 1, 2005.

86. The first four of the following examples come from the 1999 edition, pp. 30–31; the year of the edition from which the fifth example comes is not clear.

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